



MORDRED

.. and ..

HILDEBRAND.

A BOOK OF TRAGEDIES

BY

WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL,

(Author of "The Dread Voyage," "Lake Lyrics.")

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... and ...

HIDBRAND

A BOOK OF TESTIMONY

W.

WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL

... ..

WATSON

... ..

TO MY FRIENDS.

THE HONOURABLE J. C. PATTERSON,

— AND —

THE HONOURABLE A. R. DICKEY,

THIS BOOK OF TRAGEDIES

IS DEDICATED.

Entered according to the Act of the Parliament of Canada in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five, by William Wilfred Campbell, Ottawa, in the office of the Minister of Agriculture, at Ottawa.

MORDRED.

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

FOUNDED ON THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND

OF

SIR THOMAS MALORY.

(This Drama was written in July and August, 1893.)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ARTHUR, *King of Britain.*

MORDRED, *Illegitimate Son of Arthur.*

SIR LAUNCELOT.

MERLIN.

SIR GWAINED.

KING LEODEGRANCE, *Father to Guinevere.*

SIR AGRAVAINE.

SIR MADOR.

SIR BEDIVERE.

DAGONET, *the king's jester.*

A HERMIT.

GUINEVERE, *Queen of Britain.*

VIVIEN.

ELAINE, *a maiden who loves Launcelot.*

UNID, *a lady in waiting on the Queen.*

Knights, gentlemen, ladies, soldiers, herdsmen,
messengers and pages.

MORDRED

ACT. I.

SCENE I.—*A Hermitage in the Woods.*

Enter ARTHUR, LAUNCELOT and other Knights.

Launcelot. Here is a place of prayer, we will alight,
And rest a space and think us of our sins.

Arthur. Launcelot, and were I shrived and clean
Half hell itself were loosened of its pains.

Launcelot. Arthur, friend and lover of my youth,
Could'st thou but throw this black mood from thee now,
And get a sweeter hope into thy soul,
Drive out the horrid phantoms of the past,
And it were hope for Britain. Well thou knowest
Men look to thee to succor this poor land
Enrent by inward brawls and foreign hordes,
Whose fields untilled, and vanished the smoke of homes.
It hath been said that thou would'st raise once more
Out of these ruins a kingdom whose great fame
Would ring for ages down the days of earth,
And be a glory in men's hearts forever.

[*Passes to the left.*]

Arthur. Launcelot, well know I thy love for Arthur.
'Tis thy sweet, manly kinship of the heart,
Opening thy spirit's windows toward the sun,
Hath made my dark days lighter. Would that I
Had kept me holy, innocent as thee.
I might in kinder fate have made this land
A place where holiness and peace might dwell,
And such a white and lofty honor held
Before men's eyes, that all the world would come

And worship manhood's beauty freed from sin.
Such dreams have haunted me from my first youth,
In fitful slumbers or long marching hours.
These lonesome lofty vigils of the heart
Have made men deem me colder. 'Tis my sin !
Oh Launcelot I am blacker than thou knowest !

[*Exit* LAUNCELOT.]

Enter HERMIT.

Hermit And comest thou, my son, for Church's grace ?

Arthur. I come here, Father, for to have me shrived.

[*Kneels.*]

Hermit. Then thou art shriven, such a noble face
Could never harbor evil in its grace.

[*Lifts his hands in blessing.*]

Arthur. Stay holy Hermit, fair trees rot at heart,
And I am evil if this world holds ill.
I would lay bare my soul of its foul sin,
And if there be white shrift for such as me
In Heaven's mercy, I would crave it now ;
Though little of hope have I, if thou dost hear.

Hermit. Wouldst thou confess, my son, the church hath
To white the blackest sinner crawling foul [power
From earth's most sensuous cesspool, doth he but
Come in the earnest sorrow of his heart
And lay his sins within her holy keeping.
But well I know that thou art that great Arthur,
The hope of all for succor to this realm :—
For other man hath never worn such grace
And nobleness of bearing as thou wearest.
Fear not my son, whatever be the sin
Of thy hot youth, the past will be forgiven,
And holy Church will freely pardon one
And all the evil deeds that thou hast done.

Arthur. Father, my life is haunted with one thought
That comes between me and my sweetest hopes.

In battle's clamor only will it pass,
But in my lonlier moments it comes in ; —
The awful memory of one heinous sin.

Hermit. Of truth thou hast suffered over much, my son.
What is thy sin ?

Arthur. One deed beyond all others of my youth.
Mad passionate and wild to savagery,
I violated a maid's sanctuary,
And afterwards, I found,— O Christ forgive me !

Hermit. Say on !

Arthur. She was my sister !

Hermit. Sancta Maria—Ora pro nobis !

Arthur. It will not out. The evil of that night
When I, unknowing, did that awful deed,
Hath blackened all my future like a web.
And when men look up to me as their sun,
It makes my life seem like some whited tower,
Where all is foul and hideous hid within.

Hermit. Thou sayest truth, my son, thy sin be heavy.
[*Crossing himself.*

Arthur Oh swart, incestuous night whose bat-like wings
O'er-spread my life like thunder-gathering cloud,
When will thy dawn break glimmering on my soul ?
Or wilt thou drag thy weary length along
And spell thy moments out in hopeless years
Until thy black o'er-laps the black of death
In that dread journeying where all men go,
When all my dreams are spent and smouldered down
Like some far ruined sunset at life's ebb,
And hope deferred fades out in endless sleep ?
O holy man forgive mine impious presence,
Thy blessed office naught availeth me.

Hermit. Nay son grieve not as one who hath no hope.
Though awesome be this youthful sin of thine,
Whose memory blurs thy loftier, holier dreams,
Let not this one sin lead thee to blaspheme

Thus ignorantly holy Church's power.
Thy very sorrow half absolveth thee.
In name of Him who blessed the dying thief,
I bid thee look no longer at thy past,
Which eateth like some canker at 'hy heart,
Redeem thy past in deeds of future good ;
Deem'st thy high dreams were given thee for nought ?
There is a noble doom about thy face,
A writing writ of God that telleth me
That thou art not a common ordered man,
But one ordained as holy ones of old
For some great lofty cause. Lift up thy heart,
Earth hath a need of thee, thy people call,
Wrongs long unrighted, evils long unplucked,
All cry to thee for judgment. Palsy not
The strength of thy great future brooding on
An indiscretion of thy savage past.

Arthur. And is it of God, Oh ! Father, thinkest thou ?

Hermit. Yea my son ;

As are all hope and sunshine. What is life—
But spring unmindful of bleak winter-time,
Joying in living, mindless of old death ;
Youth dead to sorrow, age to coming night.
Look up, forget thine evil, drink new faith
From this glad parable of the awakening year.
The church's arms are round thee, build new hope
In this poor Kingdom as the quickening year
Hath made this wrinkled earth forget old sorrows ;
Be this but thine to do, and thou art pardoned.

Arthur. Oh ! blessed be thy counsel, even now
I feel new joys run riot in my heart.
Old hopes long faded built on my high dreams !
The old dread sorrow lightens, it is gone,
And I go forth a shrived soul even now.
Yea, hear me Father, now I consecrate
This my poor life to this great kingdom's weal,
And be my God but with me, I will raise

This head of sorrows out of clouds of ill,
And build a splendor of my chastened will.
Thy blessing Father !

Hermit. (Raises his hand in blessing.) Go forth from
Great Arthur keeper of thy people's peace. [hence
Go forth to right all wrong and guard all right,
In home and mart, in castle and in cot,
Meting the same to high and lowly lot.
Go forth in name of God to build a realm
Built up on chastity and noble deeds,
Where womanhood is gentle and austere,
And manhood strong in its great innocence.
Go, blessed of God and all thy fellow men,
Go in the strength of thy most high resolve,
Thou wondrous soul unto thy wondrous work,
The glory of all the after days to be.

Arthur. Amen ! Amen !!

SCENE II.—CAMELOT. (*Arthur crowned king.*)

Enter MERLIN and MORDRED, a hunchback, the King's illegitimate son. Outside a great clamor of voices is heard of "Arthur ! Long live King Arthur."

Merlin. Now tarry here aside while I prepare
The king for this thy filial audience.

Mordred. O mighty Merlin, I fear me all thine arts
That compass ocean, air, and deepest mine,
And have command of subtlest sciences,
Have never found the power to brew a charm,
A Sovereign draught of distillation rare,
To warm a Father's heart toward such as me.

Merlin. Thou much mistakest Mordred, he is noble.
This too-long thought on thine infirmity,
Hath made thy mind, which is as clear as glass,
Ensickly all things that it looks upon.

When Arthur, thy great father, knows his son,
His nobleness of heart will plead with him,
And when he sees what I have seen in thee,
A subtle greatness of the inner spirit,
Greater than even I, wise Merlin, have,
That prophesies a power for good or ill
Such as is rare mid men in this our age,
He will forget that outward lack of mould
In the strong, god-like, nobleness within.

Mordred. Ah Merlin, would my spirit thou wert right,
And I would show him such a son's true love,
And consecrate this subtlety within me,
To build a fence of safety round his glory.
But something tells me, some weird, evil doom,
That sits about my heart by day and night,
An awful presence that will never flit,
That he will never love me, yea, that more,
Of all things hateful to him on this earth,
My presence the most hateful. Oh great Mage,
I know that thou art skilful in thine age,
And subtle in all knowledges of lore,
But there lies in recesses of the heart,
That hath known bitter sorrow such as mine,
A deeper wisdom, intuition breeds,
That thou hast never sounded in thy lore.

Merlin. Hast thou ever seen this presence whereof thou
[speakest ?

Mordred. Yea, only as a look that haunteth faces.

Merlin. Faces ?

Mordred. I never saw it in my poor dog's face,
When he hath climbed my knees to lick my hand.
I never saw it in the mirrored peace
That brims the beauty of a forest pool ;—
Nor in the wise regard of mighty nature.
But in the face of man I oft have seen it.

Merlin. What hast thou seen, this wisdom would I know?

Mordred. I never saw it in thy look, O Mage,
But something sweeter, much akin, called pity,
But once I woke a flower-eyed little maid,
Who slumbered 'mid the daisies by a stream ;
She seemed the summer day incarnate there
With her sweet, innocent, unconscious face,
So like a flower herself amid the flowers ;
And I were lonely there in all that vast,
And thinking, ('twas only but a boy's light thought,
With some deep, other thought beyond mine age,)
To wake this human summer-morn to life,
And know this June-day conscious of its joy :
But when I bent and touched her on the arm,
I only woke a living terror there
Of eyes and limbs that fled from my amaze.
I saw it once within the Priestman's face
The only and the last time I was shriven.
I have no need for shriving priestmen since.
My spirit tells me if they hold no power
To conjure out that devil in themselves,
That darting horror that offends mine eyes,
They ne'er can cast the devils from this life,
And all their vaunts but jugglers' juggling lies.

Merlin. Oh sad, warped youth, aged before thy time,
With that worst, saddest of wisdoms on this earth,
The knowledge of thine own deformity !

[trumpets without.

Back Mordred ! here cometh the king !

Enter ARTHUR in his state robes.

Arthur. And now wise Merlin, wisest of this earth,
Here cometh thine Arthur decked in his first glory,
So great hath been the splendor of this day
That all my heart brims with the wine of it.

Merlin. Yea King, thy horn of glory doth enlarge,
Thy sun of splendor toppeth the future's marge,
May all bright auspices attend its setting.

Arthur. And now wise Mage, what hath thy will with me ?
 I am thine Arthur even being King,
 For thou hast made me, next to that weird fate
 That sat about the mystery of my getting,
 And the sweet fostership of Holy Church,
 Which hath forgiven my great youthful sin
 And set her seal of favor on my deeds.
 All present splendors thou hast prophesied,
 And made the people take me for their king,
 Hast pointed out my fitness for this office,
 And lifted Arthur from a cloud of sorrows
 Unto the golden glories of a throne.
 To-day the fealty of an hundred Earls
 Which thou hast garnered to my new-made kingdom
 Hath honored me and made me thrice a King.
 Yea, well say Merlin that my horn is full
 To plenty with the blessed hopes of earth,
 And all of this I owe unto thy favor.
 My thunder-clouds are past, my future clear
 As yon, blue summer sky. No evil lurks
 In secret for to strike at this my glory,
 Unless a bolt fell from yon dazzling blue !

[*Thunder heard in the distance—ARTHUR staggers back*
 A portent ! A portent !

Merlin. 'Tis nought, O King, but gathering thunder-
 About the thick, close heatings of the west, [heads
 The muttered portent of a summer shower.
 'Tis but a blackness that will quickly pass
 And leave a blessing on the fields and woods.
 Fear not such signs as nature's seeming anger.
 I come to thee upon a graver matter.

Arthur. Yea Merlin ! speak on.

Merlin. Arthur, I speak now to no puling youth,
 No mere sin-pricked conscience in a human form,
 But bring a kingly matter to a king,
 Whereof that he may do the kingliest deed
 That he may hap on in the unknown lease

Of all his kingship. I have kept this matter,
The deepest and the dreadest concerning thee
And all the workings of thy coming fate,
Until the hour when thou didst feel thee king
In more than seeming outward human choice,
And thou wert at thy greatest, even that I,
In all his power, might see the King I made,
Not in all the glory of his court,
His people's laudings sounding in his ears,
Not in all the shout of battle victory;
But in that dread and secret solemn hour,
When some strange doom uplifts its sombre face,
And man must show his kingship of himself.

Arthur. Yea Merlin! say on Merlin, say on!

Merlin. For this same reason I have hid till now
The secret from thee that thou hast a son.

Arthur. A son!

Merlin. Yea, a son, by thine own sister.

Arthur. Oh cruel! Oh cruel! Oh cruel!

Merlin. Yea more, for knowing all the warm desire
That thou hast unto things of beauteous shape,
And lovest chiefly what is glad and fair
To look upon in nature or human form,
Which showest in thy love for Launcelot,—

Arthur. Yea, Launcelot! Would a Launcelot were my
[son.

Mordred. (*aside*) Ah, me!

Merlin. But knowing further that a deeper feeling,
That holdeth rule in every human heart,
That knoweth greatness, would uppermost in thee,
At knowledge of the fate of thy poor son,
Who madeth not himself but bore thy sin
In outward simile in his whole life's being,
As Christ did bear men's sins upon the tree;
Who knowing all the ill that thou had'st done him,

Still had sufficient sense of inward greatness
To love the father who begat him thus ;
I feel if thou art that great Arthur dreamed
Of me these many years of toil and care
That I have worked to make thee what thou art ;
That knowing this son of thine, distorted, wry,
Diminutive in outward human shape,
And void of all those graces thou hast loved
To group about thy visions of thy court,
Hath such a soul within him like a jewel
In some enchanted casket, that were rare
In all the lore and wisdom of this age,
That thou wouldst love him only all the more
For that poor, wry, misshapen shell of his.

Arthur. Oh cruel ! cruel ! cruel !

Merlin. Mordred come forth.

[*Enter MORDRED who kneels and tries to
cover himself with his cloak.*]

Arthur. (Starts). What be this ?

Merlin. Thy son Mordred, the heir to thy realm !

Arthur. Oh black angered Heaven ! (Falls heavily to
[the ground.]

Mordred. Father ! my father ! Merlin thou has killed my
Oh Merlin thou wert over-cruel ! [father.

Merlin. Better that he were dead a thousand deaths
Than this had happened. He is not a king
In more than vulgar fancy. In mine eyes
With all thy wry, distorted body there,
Thou art a thousand times more kingly now
Than he or any like him in this realm.
And thou wilt be a king yet ere thou diest.
Oh Arthur, thou great Arthur of my dreams,
Why didst thou thus unthroned thee, showing bare
A thing of clay, where all seemed whitest marble ?

Mordred. Ha ! now he revives. Father !

Arthur. (*Rises and staggers.*) Ha! yea, yea, that cloud;
that cloud about mine eyes!

My crown! My crown! Methought I had a crown!

Merlin. Yea of a truth thou hadst one.

Arthur. And where be it, good father?

Merlin. Stumbling on sudden to the precipice of a golden
[opportunity,
Thou loosedst thy kingship and straightway it toppled over.

Arthur. And might we not make search, Father?
Might we not take lights, lights, and go find it?

Merlin. Not all the lights that light this glowing world
Might light thee to it.

Arthur. And who art thou that mocketh at me thus?

Merlin. A shadow.

Arthur. And what be I?

Merlin. In truth a shadow.

Arthur. And that, that blackness?

[*Pointing at MORDRED.*

Merlin. A shadow also, yea we all be shadows.

Arthur. And is there nothing real, nothing tangible in all
[this mist?

Merlin. Nay, nothing, save the visions we have lost,
The autumn mornings with their frosty prime,
The dreams of youth like bells at eventime
Ringing their golden longings down the mist.

Arthur. And be we dead, Father?

Merlin. Yea, I am dead to one great hope I had,
And thou art dead to what thou mightst have been,
And he is dead to what is best of all,
The holiest blossom on life's golden tree.

Arthur. And what be that, Father?

Merlin. Love! Love!

Arthur. Then he be greatest?

Merlin. Yea greater, far, though we completed greatness,
Than either thou or I could ever be.

Arthur. Then what be he?

Merlin. He is that rare great blossom of this life
Which mortals call a man.

Arthur. A man!

Merlin. Yea, a man.

Arthur. Why he is wry, distorted, short of shape,
Like some poor twisted root in human form.
And I am tall and fair, placed like a king.
And yet you make him greater, how be that?

Merlin. Didst thou but own Goliath's mighty shape,
And wert a Balder in thy face and form,
With all of heaven's lightnings in thy gaze,
Still would his greatness dwarf thee.

Arthur. Then what be I?

Merlin. The wreck of my poor hopes.

Arthur. The what?

Merlin. The shadow of a king.

Arthur. And where may be the king, if I be but the shadow?

Merlin. Gone! Gone!

He went out in his glory on a bright morn,
In all the summer splendors long ago,
And there by well-heads of my youth's bright dreams,
Be-like he's walking yet.

Mordred. Oh! Merlin wake him! 'Thou art over cruel
To play thus on his fancy with thine arts.

Merlin. And dost thou love him still?

Mordred. Yea, love is not a thing so lightly placed,
That it may perish easy. Thou mayst kill
The king in him, thou canst not kill the father.
Though thou mightst make me bitter to conspire
And topple his great kingdom round his head,
Yet I would ever love him 'neath it all.
The Arthur of thine ambitions may be dead,
But not the Arthur of my childhood's longing,
Though this poor King who hunteth his lost crown

Be but the walking shape of all those dreams.
And temptest thou me, thou Merlin, thus to hate?

Merlin. Yea, Mordred, I am cruel, I am fate.
I tempt thee but to live, and dost thou live,
Enalienate from all this love of earth,
And they but crumble this phantom round their heads.
Thou art the key by which I may unlock
The lock that I have made with mine own hands.
And if thou ever want'st an instrument,
A dagger wherewith to stab this paltry realm,
Use Vivien.

Mordred. Vivien!

Merlin. Yea Vivien. There is naught on all this earth
That cuts so sharp the thews of love and hate
And those poor brittle thongs that bind men up
In that strange bundle called society,
Like the sharp acids nature hath distilled
From out the foiled hates of an evil woman.

(*To the king.*) Ho! ho! Arthur! Great King
Arthur. Knowest thou me, Merlin?

Arthur. Yea, Merlin it is thou, and I the King,
Waking it seemeth from an evil dream.

Merlin. Yea, king we have all awakened.

Arthur. Ha! where is my crown?

Mordred. You dropped it when you fainted sire,

[*Kneels and presents it.*

Here is thy crown, Father.

Arthur. Father! yea all, I know all now. It cometh back.
And this my son? Oh Merlin, had I known
That thou didst hate me and wouldst use me thus!

Merlin. I hate thee not, King Arthur, nor do I love.
I loved an Arthur once, a phantom king,
Whom I did build on pinnacles of glory.
But he hath now long vanished, and I go,
Like many another who hath wrecked his hopes
On some false shore of human delusiveness,

To bury my pinch-beck jewels in that pit
That men call black oblivion. No, proud Arthur,
I am much over old for loves or hates,
My days are past, my mission done on earth,
I leave thee one here though, whose love or hate
Is more to thee than mine could ever be.
Twixt thee and him there are such subtle webs
Of destiny, it needeth no magician
To prophesy the running of those threads
That weave the warp of your two destinies.
Farewell Arthur! Mordred, fare thee well.

Arthur. Stay, Stay, Merlin! I have much need of thee.
[*Exit MERLIN.*

SCENE III.

Enter DAGONET the King's fool.

Dagonet. Meseems this King is like an April week.
But yestermorn he was all smiles and sun,
And now he skulks and prowls and scowls and mopes,
As though existence were all a draggled pond
In dirty weather.

Enter Vivien.

Vivien. And thou fool, but a wry toad on its edge.

Dagonet. And thou the snake's head lifted in the sedge,
Aye, sweet Vivien.

Vivien. Why snakest thou me fool? Methought that thou
[favoredst me?

Dagonet. Aye, so I do. Thou coilest round my heart,
The sweetest, wisest serpent in this world.
Thou charimest me with those dazzling eyes o' thine.
And though the blessed bread were yet in mouth,
I'd go to Hell to do a deed for thee.
And yet thou art a snake, as well thou knowest.
Is it not so, sweet Vivien?

Vivien. Can'st thou be wise for once Dagonet ?
Yea let me teach thee.

Dagonet. And what is it to be wise ?

Vivien. To leave aside that mummer's lightsome talk,
And show a front of silent dignity.

Dagonet. Like the King ?

Vivien. Aye, like the King.

Dagonet. Then to be wise is to be like the king,
To be a cup of summer wine to-day,
Anon a dish of lonesome woe to-morrow.
I love not much this wisdom thou dost teach,
These high come-ups and downs they like me not.
I am too much a fool to learn thy lesson. (sings.)

And who'd be wise
And full of sighs,
And care and evil borrow ;
When to be a fool
Is to go to school
To Happy-go-luck-to-morrow ?

Who'd tread the road,
And feel the goad,
And bear the sweatsome burden :
When loves are light,
And paths are bright
Of folly's pleasant guerdon ?

Sigh while we may,
We cannot stay
The sun, nor hold its shining.
So joy the nonce,
We live but once,
And die for all our pining.

Who'd be a king
And wear a ring
And age his youth with sorrow ;

When to be a fool
Is to go to school
To-Happy-go-luck-to-morrow?

Vivien. Aye Dagonet, thou art indeed a happy fool.
Wilt thou shew me how to make love?

Dagonet. (*Kneels in mock humility*) Sweet Vivien, I am
[thy knight.

Vivien. Is it all thou canst say?

Dagonet. What would'st thou have more?

Vivien. Oh lover's talk.

Dagonet. Thou meanest as lovers speak?

Vivien. Yea.

Dagonet. After wedding or afore, sweet Vivien?

Vivien. Afore, of course, stupid fool.

Dagonet. (*Folds his hands and recites solemnly.*)

Butter frups and mumble rings,
Whirligigs and winter-greens,
Turnip-tops and other things, I love thee!
Spindle-spouts and turtles' eggs,
Mutton-chops and milk-stools' legs,
Heigh ho! I love thee!

Vivien. And now thou art the fool in earnest.

Dagonet. Yea, and the better lover.

Vivien. And what after wedding, thou wise fool?

Dagonet. What saith the pot to the egg that is boiled
The floor to the mop that hath scrubbed it, [therein,
The rain to the moist earth,
And the bird's nest to the empty shell?
Learn, and thou shalt find it.

Vivien. And had'st thou never a lover's longing, Fool?

Dagonet. Yea, but I cured me.

Vivien. Wilt thou give me that receipt, Dagonet?

Dagonet. I filled my mouth wi' honey, and my couch wi'
And went asleep on't. [prickles,

(Vivien laughs and retires behind the curtain.)

Dagonet. Yea woe is me, is me, poor Dagonet !
I hate myself and yet I fain must smile
And play the thistle-down and dandy-puff,
The foolish froth at edge of flagonets ;
And all the while see me a tortured torrent
Winding down in the darks of its own sorrow.
Yea, Dagonet, thou art too much of fool,
Like the great King and all other fools,
To be the thistle-down thou fain wouldst seem.
For thou art also anchored by the heels
'To some sore, eating iron of thy desire.

Enter KING ARTHUR.

Arthur. Well fool, what mummeries now ?

Dagonet. I be holding a black Friday service, Sir King.

Arthur. And what sayest thou in thy supplications ?

Dagonet. I think on thee Sir King, and I think on poor
And I say, Lord have mercy upon us ! [Dagonet.

Arthur. A pious wish, Sir fool, but why pitiest thou me ?

Dagonet. For thy poverty, Sire ?

Arthur. Why poverty, fool ?

Dagonet. Yea King, thou hast a crown, thou hast wealth,
And power and lands, and yet thou lackest
The cheapest commodity i' the whole world.

Arthur. And what be that, fool ?

Dagonet. *(Going out.)* Sunshine, Sir King, that be the
[cheapest commodity.

Enter LAUNCELOT.

Launcelot. Sire !

Arthur. Launcelot sit here and let's forget
That I am king and thou the greatest knight

In this most mighty realm. Let us deem
Me but the Arthur of old days, and thou
The sunny Launcelot who was fain to shrive
His sorrowful Arthur from his darker moods,
And make a glow about the future's countenance.

Launcelot. Yea King, but methought thou sentest for me
[with most urgent commands.

Arthur. Yea, most urgent.

Launcelot. The knights and men-at-arms await below,
And all the splendid cortege thou hast ordered,
With retinue befitting thy commands.
God's benison go with thee, great Arthur,
This most auspicious day thou goest forth
To meet the high, and beauteous Guinevere,
Thy chosen mate and queen of this fair realm.

Arthur. I go not forth !

Launcelot. Thou goest not, and why ?

Arthur. Deem it not strange my Launcelot that I sit
Here thus disconsolate my betrothal morn,
Nor over eager for to play the lover,
And decked in splendor go to meet the queen.
Launcelot thine Arthur hath a sorrow.
Hast seen my son Mordred ?

Launcelot. Yea Arthur, I have seen this Mordred.
Yea, mine Arthur, thou hast indeed a sorrow,
And could thy Launcelot but help thee bear it !

Arthur. What thinkest thou of this Mordred, this my son ?
Likest thou him not ?

Launcelot. He is so strange, so small, so queer of limb,
At first I marvelled, then I pitied, then —

Arthur. Yea, and what ?

Launcelot. I met his eyes, and straightway I forgot
The manner of man he was, save that a soul
Of wondrous scorn and mystery met mine ;
That froze the present, made the future dread,
With strange forbodings. While I mused he passed,

But left that chill behind him in my blood.
And yet he seemeth a soul, Sire, to be pitied.

Arthur. Yea, all but pity, Arthur's son should claim.

Launcelot. 'Tis thy cross Arthur, as a king thou'lt bear it.
And we all seeing shall say our king, like Christ,
Beareth his cross 'neath the sunlight i' the shadow,
And take pattering from thy greatness.

Arthur. I bear not, Launcelot, it beareth me down,
Down into black depths, aye and blacker.
He cometh betwixt my spirit and the sun.
Canst thou not help thy king?
I seem like one who walketh in dreams where all are shadows
Till I seem but a shadow-king walking in a realm of shadows.

Launcelot. Take courage to thee Arthur, it will off,
Go in thy kingship's strength and meet thy queen.
Her beauty and her kindliness will cure thee
Of this distemper.

Arthur. Nay, Launcelot, this is the very matter,
As thou well knowest she hath never seen me,
And for the very reverence I bear her,
A maiden princess, I would hold as snow
In each thing that regardeth purity.
By all the love that I would bear to her,
I would not have her meet me in this mood.
But I would have her meet her Arthur when
In kingly grace he is himself a king.
Yea, Launcelot for this I sent for thee.
'Tis mine intent that I should tarry here
And in the joustings cure me of this fit,
While thou dost go forth in my place and bring
The Princess Guinevere to Camelot.

Launcelot. Nay Sire, not I! Not Launcelot!

Arthur. By thy love for me, thou wilt do it,
Whom else in all this kingdom wide but thee
Could I send on a mission such as this.
I honor all thy love in sending thee,
The one true knight, the glory of my realm.

In this, Oh Launcelot, thou canst help thy king,
 And show abroad the love that 'twixt us lies.
 Till men will say: "So much of love there lies
 Betwixt King Arthur and great Launcelot,
 That when the king stayed ill at Camelot
 He sent forth Launcelot to fetch the Queen."
 And what more fitting messenger to send
 Than thee in all thy strong and splendid youth,
 The flower and sun of all my chivalry,
 Launcelot the young and pure-in-heart.
 Thou wilt do this and crown thy love for me.

Launcelot. Nay, mine own Arthur, men will rather say:
 Why stayed the king, unkingly, thus at home,
 And sent forth Launcelot to meet his bride?
 Oh Arthur, by my love, go forth thyself.
 Rather thou sentest me sack a hundred cities
 Than do this deed that will un-king thee so.

Arthur. Launcelot, I would rather die than go.

Launcelot. Yea Arthur, I would rather die than go.

Arthur. Launcelot lovest thou thine Arthur?

Launcelot. Yea Arthur, well thou knowest.

Arthur. Wilt thou honor me as a king?

Launcelot. Yea to the death.

Arthur. Then the king commands that thou goest for the
 [love thou bearest Arthur.

Launcelot. Yea Sire, I go. [*aside*] And all fears go with
 [me.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE IV.—*Leodegrance's Castle at Camelard.*

Enter LEODEGRANCE and Pages.

I.eo. Now is the day auspicious to my house
 When Guinevere will wed the mighty Arthur.
 Golden the mornings, happy speed the nights,
 With constellations soft and wooing hours

That speed the bride and bridegroom to their bowers.
Splendid be my prime and soft mine age,
Who am a father to this mighty realm.
Ho there, without !

[*Trumpets heard, enter pages.*

Page. Mighty Sire, with trumpet and with drum,
The lofty Arthur with his host hath come.
A world of spears and pennons fill the town,
And all the burghers feast their eyes with seeing.

[*A clatter of arms without, Enter LAUNCELOT
who kneels.*

Launcelot. Sir King !

Leo. Where tarries the great Prince Arthur ?

Launcelot. He cometh not, my lord.

Leo. And why ?

Launcelot. The king on sudden sick at Camelot
Hath sent me with his heart to Camelard
To plead his absence with thee and the Princess,
And guard her glad way forth to Camelot.
I am that Launcelot, that knight-at-arms,
Who loveth Arthur more than maid or king.
Perchance if thou wilt trust her to my care,—
Here is great Arthur's order.

[*Presents a ring.*

Leo. Welcome to Camelard, most noble knight,
Well ken we of thy name and nobleness.
It grieves us much great Arthur could not come,
And guest of our poor hospitality,
Receive our noble daughter at our hearth,
And lead her home from out our very doors.
This much perforce had willed a father's pride.
This much had satisfied a father's love.
But seeing Chance hath given us none of it,
We must be gracious to her messenger
And thank her for the safety she hath sent.
Tomorrow's dawn we give into thy hands

The maiden daughter of our kingly love,
To guard in safety to great Arthur's court,
There to be wedded as his faithful queen.
Meanwhile receive our hospitality.
This castle and this town are thine to-night
In honor of the Princess and the King.

Launcelot. We thank thee Sire for this thy hospitality.

Leo. Yea one thing further, knowing our daughter's
And fearing a maiden's pride might feel a hurt, [nature,
At the King's absence, we would therefore advise
That this be kept a secret till tomorrow,
When we will break it softly to Her Highness;
Though she hath never seen him, as thou knowest,
She now half loves him for his kingly virtues,
And being her father's daughter thinks it well
To act a daughter's just obedience.
She hath a wayward nature, 'tis a pride
We have in common, therefore we defer
This matter till tomorrow. 'Twould not do
To let her sleep on such sharp disappointment.

Launcelot. As you will, noble lord.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE V.—*The apartment of GUINEVERE—GUINEVERE
and a lady attendant.*

Guinevere. Now Unid I have seen this noble Arthur.
I spied him from my turret as he rode,
And all my heart went out in love to him,
The knight incarnate of my girlhood's dreams.
Did'st thou notice his bearing Unid?

Unid. Yea my lady, and fairer man and nobler knight
Eye hath not seen.

Guin. His face was like the gardens when the sun
Lifts up his crimson splendor after dawn,
His bearing as the bearing of a god,
And yet as one who would be kind and loving.

Unid. Yea, my lady, he seemed glad and fair,
And fit to be the lord to thee, my Princess.

Guin. Come Unid take my hand and we will sit
And speak of this great Arthur. Well thou knowest
My maiden fears regarding this same marriage.
I honored this Arthur as a noble king,
'The mighty monarch and the splendid warrior.
And yet I fear him for reputed coldness.
Thou knowest me a princess warm in blood,
Brim with fire and sweetness of this life,
Not fitted to be wedded to a statue,
A marble, though that marble be a king.
For something stirred my life-springs long ago,
And whispered, Guinevere were made for love
And love alone would rule her destiny.
And when I looked and saw him enter there,
And knew my lord, and felt him gaze my way,
Knowing his errand to my father's hall,
I blushed me till mine inmost being burned.
And all the roses whispered, "Arthur"! "Arthur"!
And "Arthur"! "Arthur"! rang through all the halls.
I wonder much if he will love me Unid?

Unid. In sooth he must, my lady, be he noble.
Though he never saw thee, who but heard
Of all thy charms, my Princess Guinevere,
Could help but love thee when he seeth thy face?

Guin. 'Tis in my mind to sound his manner, Unid.
To take him treacherous and unawares.
I like not much this way of wedding maids,
In cruel blindness of their coming fate.
This marriage savoreth much of state affairs,
Even o'er much to please my noble fancy.
I would me much to see this royal lover,
And know with mine own senses if he loves
With that intense delight and warmth of feeling,
With which poor Darby freely weddeth Joan.
Though I be all a queen I be a woman,
With all the thoughts and instincts of a woman.

Unid. What would'st thou do, my lady ?

Guin. That I this even meet him in the garden.

Unid. On what pretence, my lady ? 'Twere a risky busi-
[ness.

Guin. Thou wilt be veiled and take this golden ring,
Cozen his squire, and say, this for the knight
Who rode within the castle walls to-day.
Leave thou him word, a lady in distress,
Who needeth a knight to aid her in her sorrow,
Would meet him in the garden walls at sunset.

Unid. I will do it my lady. but what if he come not ?

Guin. No danger of his not coming if he be
The man I worshipped from my tower this morning.
He'd come were yon rose-plot enchanted ground,
And gated by a thousand belching fiends.
He'd come, my king ! Oh Unid, how I love him !

SCENE VI.—*A rose garden adjoining the Castle.*

Enter LAUNCELOT.

Launcelot. This is a sunset bower for lovers made.
The air seems faint with pale and ruddy bloom,
The red for rosy dreams, the white for pure
And holy maiden thoughts all unexpressed.
There hangs fatality upon this place.
I cannot shake its ague from my heart.
I would I were safe back in Camelot,
With this fair Guinevere, great Arthur's glory.
I'd rather meet the mad kerls of the Isles,
Than come again on such a quest as this.
This Guinevere they say is proud and cold,
Not such a woman as Launcelot would love.
Yea love, what doth it mean, and this strange maiden,
What can she want of me ? Aye, here she comes.

Enter GUINEVERE, veiled.

Guin. My lord forgive this meeting in this place.

(Aside) O, if he like it not!

Launcelot. Wouldst thou ask mine aid?

Guin. Yea, wouldst thou aid a maiden in distress?

Launcelot. Lady, all maidens have a right to a true
[knight's help.

Guin. My lord hast thou ever loved?

Laun. Many fair women have I seen, but none to love
Why askest thou me this? [as thou meanest.

Guin. Wouldst thou fight for one like me?

[*Throwing aside her cloak.*

Laun. (*Starts and stands as one in a dream.*) Fair lady!

(Aside.) Kind heaven what be this?

In all my dreams I never saw such beauty

Of woman's face or of a woman's form.

She fills my heart like combs of golden honey.

Guin. My lord, thou hast lost thy tongue.

(Aside) I had not dreamed this.

Laun. Fair lady, forgive my sudden lack of speech,
But never in my existence have I seen

Such loveliness and maiden grace as thine.

Yea, I would call it benison, could I stand,

And gaze upon thee as thou art, forever.

There's some fatality that draws me to thee,

Like I had known thee somewhere long ago.

Guin. My lord!

Laun. Thou art all glory, all that this life is,
And all before but one poor pallid dream

Of this real living. Now I see thy face,

I know what heaven is and all delights

That erring mortals lost in Paradise.

Guin. My lord! (*Aside*) Sweet heaven this be too blessed.

Laun. Fair maiden, Princess, lady, what thou art
Is what I'd die for. In mine inmost heart

Bind me in blackness under hell's foul night,
And it were nothing, after dream like this.

Guin. (Rising up.) Oh mercy! damned or not, I love
[thee still.

Laun. Why doth not nature crack and groan?

Guin. (Crawls to his feet). Oh be thou fiend or imp or
Thy kisses burn me even through this mist. [Launcelot.

Laun. Yea, thou dost move me as never woman hath
Oh would to God that we had never loved. [moved.
Then thou wouldst have been Guinevere, and I Launcelot.

Guin. What be we now?

Laun. Damned souls.

Guin. Then sweet, my love, it were thus to be damned.

Laun. Oh thou must go, proud Guinevere, tomorrow
Unto great Arthur's court and be his bride,
And I will be that olden Launcelot
In shape and seeming, though I hold a devil.
Oh never more, mine Arthur, will I look
With peace and frankness on thy noble face.
'Twixt thee and me a wall is builded up
Of hideous evil. Guinevere, my love,
We were damned long ago, and this be hell.

Guin. Oh most unfortunate me, thou art not Arthur,
And I am Guinevere and I have loved.
Though I go morrow morn to Camelot
And place my hand in his and pledge him mine,
Not all the clamor of glad abbey-bells,
Or heavenward incense, may kill out the fever
Of thy hot kisses on my burning lips.
I am not Arthur's. He is but a name,
A ringing doom that haunts me round the world.
Launcelot, we were wedded long ago
Before this life in some old Venus garden,
And this brief meeting but re-memory
Awakening from some cursed doze of life

Unto this present glory of our love.
Thou wilt not leave me Launcelot, loveless lorn ?

Laun. Aye, this be hell !

Guin. Aye, hell to me to be divorced from thee.

Laun. Thou art betrothed to our great lord high Arthur,
And I that Arthur's trusted bosom friend.
And yet I'd kiss again thy honied lips,
Though Arthur's shadow flaming stood between.
I'm not an Adam to be driven out
With flaming brand from thy sweet paradise.
I'd hold thee Guinevere in these mine arms,
Though on each side, asquar, a "shalt not" stood.
I'd fight 'gainst all, aye Arthur, mine old self.
Oh Guinevere, this love hath made me mad.
Oh were't that all were changed in nature's course.
That I were not myself but some rude shape.
That thou wert not so sweet to look upon,
But sour and crabbed and old for Arthur's sake,
So that all might have gone the olden way.

Guin. Oh that this night might never pass away,
We and this garden here forever stay,
Yon rising moon forever hold her crest
Above the fringed peace of yonder West,
These roses ever perfumed petals cast,
So that our love in its glad youth might last ;
No bleak to-morrows with their Arthurs come,
With evil waking to a sombre doom ;
No age, like autumn, wrinkling to decays,
Filled with sad hauntings of gone yesterdays.

[*Curtain.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The forest of Bracchiande.*

Enter MERLIN and VIVIEN.

Merlin. Tarry we here, for I am fain for rest. [*sinks down.*
Oh mighty Slumber, sweet Oblivion,
Make this day night and seal my sleep-ward eyes ;
And bear me in thy light and feathery bark
For I am over-weary of this world.

Vivien. Give me the book of charms wherein is written
The power whereof that I may guard thy rest.
[*Merlin gives her the book.*

Merlin. Thou hast poor Merlin on the weaker side.
[*He sleeps.*

Vivien. Sleep ! Sleep !
[*VIVIEN mutters the charm.*
[*MERLIN tries to awaken.*

Merlin. Ho ! Ho ! a mountain lieth on me. Take off
[this mountain !
Ha ! Ha ! mine olden power, and thou art gone at last !
[*Tries to rise.*

Vivien. (*Mutters charm.*) Sleep ! Sleep !

Merlin. Methought it thundered, and a drop of rain
Fell on my forehead.

Vivien. Sleep ! Sleep !
Spirit of slumber, rise from thy dark caves !
[*The spirit of sleep rises up as a
grey mist and looms about.*

Wrap him in thy shadowy embrace
And bind him in thy filmy, silken bonds
A thousand ages.

Merlin. Oh light, thou goest out ! [Sinks again.

Vivien. Come, black Oblivion, from thy shadowy tomb !
[*The spirit of oblivion rises as a black smoke.*

Shroud him in thy swart and deep embrace
A thousand ages. Bind his senses fast.
Make him all droppings of a foul decay.

[MERLIN *moans and sinks in sleep*
[VIVIEN *weaves paces about him. Spirits rise*
and wind him in a grey and black smoke.

Sleep like any rock or clod of earth,
Thou coffin that enclosed a human soul.
The blind, dull years take never note of thee,
For thou art part and parcel of the past.
Now Arthur, that thy great right hand is gone,
Vivien the devil backs to Camelot,
Vivien the scorned, the dust betwixt thy feet,
Doth back to Camelot where vengeance waits.
I am resolved to be the villain dire,
And cunning devil of this present play.
Then hence to Camelot to achieve mine end.
I'll shadow Mordred, work upon his ill,
And mould him creature to my devil's will.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE II.—*Castle at Camelot.*

Enter MORDRED.

Mordred. Two roads there are for me in this dark world,
Both shadowed by the gloom of haunted groves.
One leads to quiet and kind nature's peace.
I'm part inclined to join a brotherhood,
Composed of nature and mine inward thoughts,
And take my shadow from this damned court,
Where so much ill begins to lift its head.
The other road leads to no happiness ;
But dark ambition—it lowers about my brain,
And hatred at the scorn of human eyes.
Yea, I am half resolved to be a man,
And take a part in this poor shifty world,
And help to pull the ropes behind the scenes
That aid the puppets to their forced parts.

Yea, sooth indeed that Vivien hath a devil,
But it is such a sweet and clever devil,
I cannot help but take it to mine arms.
She hath a counsel toward the stormier part.
She puts her little foot on fate's grim head,
And harks it hiss. I am persuaded much
To make a stir to remedy my wrongs.
And yet my loftier nature cries me no.
Oh! Mordred, what art thou, mis-shapen devil?
Thou wilt be sweet as Launcelot in the grave,
Though thou canst never smile on Guinevere,
Or other star of brightness, stand by Arthur
Like lofty pine that girds the hills of snow.
Yea, I am half constrained to be a devil,
And take this mighty kingdom by the walls,
And shake it till its deep foundations thunder.
There is no love for Mordred in these precincts;
Took he the lonely road tomorrow morn,
They'd cover his face and laugh the world along,
Unmindful of his setting.

Enter VIVIEN.

Vivien. Nay not so, there are two as would grieve thee.

Mordred. Aye, two?

Vivien. Yea, two, I and thy dog.

Mordred Yea sooth would grieve my poor four-footed
Better that Mordred had been got a dog, [beast.
With four good legs and strength of limbs and back,
A pattern to his species, than be thus
A blot on all the beauty of his kind.
Vivien, I would that I were shelved in earth.

Vivien. Doubtest thou my love?

Mordred. Thou art a strange and subtle human mixture
Of cleverness and charm and swift deceit,
And yet I like thee, though thou voicest me
Upon the evil longings of my nature.
What canst thou love in me?

Vivien. Yea all of thee, not thy mis-shapen body,
 But thy deep, precious mind, thy spirit rare,
 That patent greatness seated on thy brow
 Wherefore I'd see thee lift this Arthur down,
 And show thy kingship on thy rightful throne.
 Thou hast a grievance against this callous world,
 If ever man were saddled by grim woe.

Enter LAUNCELOT at left, followed by GUINEVERE.

And here doth come the way as will help thee to it.
[Pulls MORDRED back into the shadow.]

Laun. (*Comes forward followed by GUINEVERE.*)
 My dearest lady why wilt tempt me thus?
 Thou art the rightful, wedded spouse of Arthur.

Guin. (*Kneels.*) Oh! Launcelot thou hast damned me
[with thy beauty.]
 I am no more the rightful wife of Arthur,
 I cannot live without thee, Launcelot.

Laun. Lady, this stolen sweetness is a hell.
 I am no more the Launcelot that I was,
 Nor would I be that Launcelot for high Heaven.

[Both pass on.]
Vivien. (*Aside to MORDRED.*) These words are rungs by
[which to build thy ladder.]
 Over the ruins of this doomed kingdom.

Mordred. I cannot play thus on my father's shame,
 Even though he hate me. I would rather go
 And bury my sorrows in a hermit's grave
 Than build a power upon this human folly.
 Even these twain, my heart doth pity them.
 Not all their beauty hath kept them from this hell.

Vivien. Hast thou no pride, Prince Mordred?
 Yea, wait a breath, I'll show thy wrongs too deep
 To languish in a monkish wilderness.
 What hast thy soul to do with weeds and turf?
 Assert thy greatness or else kill thyself.
 Thou art not fit to cumber this flat earth
 If thou canst not assert thy dignity.

Were I mis-shapen o'er a thousand times,
Had but one eye, a wen upon my neck,
And swart and foul as foulest Caliban,
And were a man, I'd make my kingship felt—
So all should fear the God that looked a devil.

Mordred. Where'er thou comest from, thou comest not
[from Heaven.

Vivien. Yea, what cometh down from Heaven is not for
[such as thee.
The day doth come when thou wilt call on me.

Re-enter GUINEVERE alone.

Vivien. Stay lady, I would speak with thee.

Guin. What art thou, woman?

Vivien. I am a maiden here about tny court,
Of whom 'tis said that she did love great Arthur,
Our high, lord Arthur, whom thou lovest so well ;
If this be my poor crime, forgive me lady,
Seeing thou thyself art happier in the same.
Thou art the splendid moon to his great planet,
And we but stars that vanish at thy rising

Guin. What wouldst thou with me?

Vivien. I would bring unto thy notice one,
Wronged of nature and his human kind,
Knowing where thine admiration stopped,
Might follow thy pity.

Mordred. Nay, all but pity. Pity is such a gift
That all the world would grant it, none receive.
Grant me thy scorn, lady, but withhold thy pity.
Thou mightst pity a horse or dog or fowl,
But man of rarest compounds moulded up,
And standing on foundations of a soul,
Hath too much of the god within him hid
To need such shallow, cold, inclement gifts.
Your pities would freeze the icéd heart of winter
Colder within its breast.

Guin. And what art thou, strange heap, that speakest
[thus unto the queen.

Mordred. Madam, I am one who through this world,
Goeth by ways of sorrow and mishap.
Knowest me not, Madam?

Guin. Thou seemest like some gloomier Dagonet,
Wearing the proud black of some mock tragedy.
Art thou another fool?

Vivien. (*Aside.*) Ah! that will touch him.

Mordred. A fool, Madam! Callest thou Mordred a fool?
Takest thou him for one who juggles for a court?
A football for the passing to merriment,
Forgotten ere his wit hath passed to sadness.
Because I wear mis-nature on my form,
Knowest thou not the son of Britain's king?

Guin. I know thee not, save that thou art insolent.
Pass! You bar my way.

Mordred. Is there so little in this royalty
That men know not a king when he goes forth?
When that great Arthur thou callest lord goes out,
I tell thee, Madam, I am Britain's king.

Guin. Enough insolent! is it some mock tragedy
Thou playest? Or art thou mad?

Mordred. Madam though thou wert thousand times a
The day will come when thou wilt eat those words [queen,
With the salt rue of utter wretchedness.

Vivien. (*Aside.*) He hath awakened at last.

Enter LAUNCELOT.

Guin. Dost threaten thy queen? Make way, monster!

Laun. (*Rushing forward.*) Dost thou insult the Queen?

Mordred. Nay, not as thou hast insulted great Arthur's wife.

Laun. Toad! abortion! take that, and that. (*Beats him*
[with the flat of his sword.

Mordred. (*Starting back and drawing*). Thou hast slain
[pity and peace forever.
Come on! adulterous knight, and each foul stroke
Dishonoring my poor back, I'll pay with hate
To fullest usury. (*They close*).

[LAUNCELOT *disarms* MORDRED.]

Laun. There go, Mis-shapen. Wert thou not a Prince,
I'd teach thee manners toward thy father's wife;
Wert thou a man, and not that which thou art,
With this quick blade I'd stop thy craven heart.

Mordred. There is nought more to do but to slay me.
(*Bares his breast.*) Slay me ere I kill myself.

Vivien. Nay! Nay!

Laun. Kill thyself, Prince, Launcelot fights with men!
(*To the Queen.*) I will follow you, my lady.

Exit LAUNCELOT and the Queen.

Mordred. (*Flings his sword away.*) All sweet compas-
[sions, pityings and resolves
That dwelt in Mordred's breast are slain at last,
Slain by a woman's scorn, a man's brutality.
A last good-bye to all my gladder thoughts.
And hail dark vengeance, plots and evil counsels.
Mordred is mis-shapen, then will he breed chaos.
Mordred is monstrous, then will he breed horrors.
Mordred is dark, then will he cast a shadow,
That ne'er shall loose this kingdom's light again.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE III.—*Another part of the Castle.*

Enter VIVIEN.

Vivien. Now for the plot to bring this kingdom down.
I've racked my wits. Yea, I have got a plan.
Ho! here comes Mordred.

Enter MORDRED.

Art thou resolved to put it to an issue?
Or art thou craven?

Mordred. Yea I am all determination now.
Compunction's dead. Yea, I am over-tired
Of playing the wart upon the hand of time.
But am resolved to be that hand itself,
And move the issues of this foolish world.

Vivien. What is thy plot?

Mordred. To hold the world at bay.

Vivien. 'Tis too vague.

Mordred. Yea all this life is vague till evil shrinks
The vistas of our longings down to lusts.
My plot is this, to reach this kingdom by
The sinister door that opens to Launcelot.

Vivien. Yea, 'tis my thought.

Mordred. To catch the queen in her own guilty net,
Then open her shame to all the gaping world.
'Twill bring great Arthur's glory by the walls,
With thunder and smoke of splendor to the ground.
Launcelot is half of Arthur's greatness,
And when he hateth Launcelot for the Queen,
This house of majesty will rend itself,
And Mordred be the raven in the smoke,
Flapping his wings across it's desolation.

Vivien. Yea, then will my hate,—my love,—

Mordred. Nay woman do not speak of hates or loves
Or other foolish human-hearted moods
Of man's poor weakness, nay, but steel thyself
To be an engine of the crushing fates;
For he who would be powerful must be iron
And adamant amid this cruel world,
Knowing not heat nor cold, remorse nor shame,
Doing the deed that cometh to his hand.
But we must have a care and watch and wait
And bait the trap and lay the springe and mine.

Not such a greatness crumbles in a day.
Much might be lost by hastening the issue.
Some one must work upon the moody king
And mould him softly, cunningly to knowledge
Of his cuckoldship. It must be deftly done,
Or like spark o' the powder, it would send
Our plottings and hopings out o' the skyhole.

Vivien. It is well.

Mordred. Meanwhile we watch the Queen and Launcelot,
Each action, aye, the changing of their faces ;
Till knowledge be garnered of their secret commerce.
Who will approach the King ?

Dagonet. (*Heard without singing.*)

Morning her face is,
Blue seas her eyes,
All of earth's sweetness
In their light lies.

Coral her lips are,
Red reefs of doom,
There do Love's ships drive,
Down to their doom.

Vivien. Leave it to me, here cometh one who may work
[the matter.

Mordred. Who be it ? Not the fool ?

Vivien. Yea, the fool ! He is not all surface, he is deep,
Yea, deep for me.

Mordred. May he be trusted ?

Vivien. Yea, like one who is in love.
Leave me Prince, I would sound him.

Dagonet. (*Enters singing.*)

There would I shipwreck,
Swooning to death,
Passing to darkness
On the winds of her breath. [*Exit MORDRED.*
Ho Vivien !

Vivien. Well fool, and what wert thou singing?

Dagonet. 'Twas but a fool's carol.

Vivien. If thou wert not a fool I would say thou wert
[in love.

Dagonet. (*Starts*) Well guessed, Vivien.
And by Our Lady, thou art in the right of it.

Vivien. And who might be the object, sir Fool?

Dagonet. Madam, I am deep in love with three mistres-
[ses.

To wit, the past, the present, and the future.

Vivien. And how be that, Fool?

Dagonet. The first be my breakfast which I have had,
The second my dinner which I have just eaten,
And the third be my supper, which like the morrow
Is the more joyful as yet to come.

Vivien. Wouldst thou do me a favor?

Dagonet. What be it?

Vivien. Dost thou love the king?

Dagonet. Yea that I do, though he be sometimes like a
Spoiled on the weather-side. [great child,
There be something grieves him.

Vivien. Yea, well hath he cause to grieve!

Dagonet. Thou dost say so! What be the cause?

Vivien. The queen.

Dagonet. Why, she be well favored?

Vivien. Yea, but treacherous.

Dagonet. Aye, knowest thou that?

Vivien. Yea, and more!

Dagonet. Then is hell come on earth!
What wilt have me do?

Vivien. I would have thee warn the king.

Dagonet. The king!

Vivien. Yea, the king.

Dagonet. As well ask the cricket to pipe for the thunder-
Dost thou crave my destruction so dearly? [storm.

Vivien. Thou alone canst do it and survive,
Thou art of so little worth in his estimation,
And thou must.

Dagonet. Yea, Vivien, I will. Oh poor world,
Where e'en royalty cannot 'scape the blight!
God save us all! I will e'en commence now.
Here cometh the king. [Exit VIVIEN.

KING enters at the left.

Dagonet. Though she bade me hellward, I will obey.
But what evilment is abroad now,
That would I know? There's something back o' this.
The king a cuckold! Then Heaven help us all!
I would this were dispatched, yet how to do it,
Passeth mine understanding.

Arthur. Well, sir Fool,
Hast a merry message for my heart to-day?

Dagonet. Yea Sire.

Arthur. Then mouth it, Fool.

Dagonet. He who cometh to the wall hath crossed the
last ditch.

Arthur. Thine is but grim comfort, Fool.

Dagonet. Then is it thine, King, and he who garners not
Can laugh with death. [i' the morning

Arthur. Indeed thou art over-weird,
Come, play me a masque.

Dagonet. A masque, Sire! Should it be merry?

Arthur. Aye, merry, or thou ruest it!

Dagonet. Here be a comedy, Sire;—
There be a king, Sire;—

Arthur. Yea.

Dagonet. And there be a queen, Sire,
And there be a bishop—nay, a knight.

Arthur. And what then?

Dagonet. The knight taketh the queen!

Arthur. And the king, Fool?

Dagonet. Oh he be fools-mated! ha! ha! ha!

Arthur. And where be the comedy, Fool?

Dagonet. Oh the fiends laugh i' the pit,
That be the comedy, ha! ha! ha!

Arthur. Ha! hast thou a moral?

Dagonet. Nay, not a moral, Sire! Morals be not in it.

Arthur. Thou art but a wry fool to-day.

Dagonet. (*Aside.*) My plan faileth.
(*To the king.*) Yea Sire, I passed an uncommon sorry night.

Arthur. How fool?

Dagonet. I dreamed of thee, Sire, and as I love thee,
I liked it not.

Arthur. What was thy dream?

Dagonet. I dreamed I saw thee stand, and back of thee
A great blackness, that thou sawest not,
And from the shadow loomed—pardon me Sire—the queen
And—and—

Arthur. Ha, and what?

Dagonet. Forgive thy poor fool, Sire, but methought I
[saw Sir Launcelot.]

Arthur. (*In a terrible passion.*) Heaven damn thee, beast!
(*Knocks Dagonet down and would throttle him.*) [scum!
Did the greatest knight 'i this kingdom
Dare even dream such a thought, I would hack him to earth.]

Dagonet. Slay me, great Arthur, but forgive thy fool.

Arthur. Knowest thou not thou hast slandered the whole
[realm?]

Dagonet. I am but a poor fool, Sire.

Enter GWAINE, a tall clumsy youth in scullion's dress.

Arthur. Who art thou?

Gwaine. Thou must tell me.

Arthur. I am the king.

Gwaine. Art thou? Thou lookest like one.

Arthur. Whence comest thou?

Gwaine. I came out o' the marches yestermorn,
Where I served my father i' the bogs,
Intentioning to be a knight,
And they put me down in the kitchen.

Arthur. Thou wouldst be a knight?

Gwaine. Yea!

Arthur. And wherefore?

Gwaine. That I might serve the king.

Arthur. Thou wouldst serve me?

Gwaine. That I would.

Arthur. (*Loosening Dagonet*) Then hang yonder imp i'
[the crane over the castle wall.

Gwaine. Come, rat! (*lifts DAGONET and hangs him on*
[the crane.)

Dagonet. Oh, Oh, the shame!

Gwaine. Hath such as thou shame?

Dagonet. Yea, I house me a soul.

Gwaine. Then is it poorly lodged. (*goes out.*)

Arthur. (*Strides back and forth.*) Yea a fool!—worse
[than a fool!

Arthur, why wilt thou shame thyself even in thought?
Out damned suspicion, that insulteth my dignity!

Enter GUINEVERE.

Arthur. Madam, I would entreat thy pardon!

Guin. Wherefore my lord?

Arthur. For a thought. Guinevere, I am unworthy of
thy queenliness.

Guin. Nay, nay my lord, not so. I am but flesh and
blood.

Arthur. Thou art a Queen !

Guin. Yea, and a weak woman.

Arthur. It seemeth we be strangers even yet.

Guin. Aye, my lord.

Arthur. Thou art cold, Madam, and I like that iciness.
It well becometh the left side of this whiteness I uphold.
What wouldst with Arthur, this morning, my Queen ?

Guin. I would know of the tournament thou hast in
[hand.

Arthur. Yea, the tournament !—the tournament !
I fear I am over moody and forgetful at times.
Hast thou seen Launcelot ?

Guin. (*Starts.*) Why Launcelot, my lord ? He is not the
King.

Arthur. Yea, not the king, but he hath charge of such
[matters.

Knowest thou my lady, that Arthur loveth Launcelot.
Yea, had Arthur a brother or a son, would he were Launce-
[lot.

And were Launcelot evil, the Heavens would distil poison.

Guin. Yea, my lord, but thou forgetest the tourney.

Arthur. Heralds have been sent out and from all parts of
[the kingdom.
Jousts are invited, with strange and wondrous tests.

Re-enter GWAINÉ.

Gwaine. Well, what next ?

Arthur. Sirrah ! the Queen !

Gwaine. (*Doffs his cap.*) Morrow, Madam.

Arthur. To your knees ! by my blade, to your knees !

Gwaine. By my legs, I am no lick-spittle to claw the
Kneel to your own woman, I'll to none. [earth.

Arthur. Death ! down on your life ! (*Draws.*)

Guin. Nay, nay he will kneel.

Gwaine. Not he, King or other man, I can crack a neck.

Come on, give me a quarterstaff and I'll knock your Kings like nine-pins.

Guin. (*Gets between.*) Nay ! nay !

Arthur. Wilt thou kneel ?

Gwaine. I will fight, but I will not kneel.
Not to mine own mother, Gwaine is honest but a plain man.

Guin. And thou shalt not kneel, if thou wilt not.
Thou art well favored, had'st thou manners.

Gwaine. Manners, Madam, like fine feathers,
But hide the lice 'i the bird.
Gwaine loveth acts not appearances.

Arthur. Madam, wilt thou that I make him kneel ?

Guin. Nay, but grant his wish.

Arthur. What wilt thou, knave ?

Gwaine. That I be made a knight.

Arthur. Thou must kneel to be knighted.

Gwaine. Not to man.

Arthur. To thy God, then.

Gwaine. So be it, if it must. (*Kneels.*)

Arthur. What be thy name ?

Gwaine. They called me Gwaine 'i the Marches.

Arthur. *Lifts his sword.*)

Gwaine. (*Leaps to his feet.*) Wouldst thou hit a man
[when he is down ?

Arthur. I would knight thee, clown, 'Tis the mode.

Gwaine. Oh ! but be careful King 'i the doing. (*Kneels.*)

Arthur. Art thou of noble blood ?

Gwaine. Dost thou mean honest—Gwaine is plain, if thou
[meanest 'i the getting, no one can call Gwaine's mother
[a whore.

Arthur. (*Raises his sword and strikes him with the flat on
[the shoulder.*) Rise, Sir Gwaine.

Gwaine. (Rises.) Is it done, King?

Arthur. It is in sooth.

Gwaine. Then King am I thine, but yours first, Madam.
Gwaine is plain but honest, I would have a sword, King.

Arthur. Go, get thee one.

Gwaine. Dost thou mean it, King?

Arthur. Yea.

Gwaine. (Going to the Arras and taking one down proceeds to buckle it on.) Then this one pleaseth me.

Guin. Stop, knight! 'Tis the king's.

Gwaine. Then will it be the king's still. *(Goes out.)*

Arthur. What more wouldst thou with me, my lady?

Guin. I would speak of one Mordred.

Arthur. My son! what of him?

Guin. My lord, I would have him banished the Court.
He is sinister on my sight and exceeding forward.
I like him not, wilt thou promise?

Arthur. It is a heavy matter. We will consider it.

SCENE IV.—*Enter ELAINE and her retinue.*

A Squire. Lady, this is the place, we will retire.
Within short space the Queen doth come this way.

[*Exit all except ELAINE.*]

Elaine. They say she is all goodness, she will grant
That I may meet this noble knight and fair,
And know my love returned, or else I die.

Enter GUINEVERE and ladies.

Guin. Lady, what wouldst thou? *(Elaine kneels.)*

Elaine. Oh most noble lady, I am a maid,
Called Elaine, daughter unto Astolat's lord,
Who cometh unto thee, Madam, for kind help
Upon the matter of a maiden's love.

It rendeth me so, unless it be returned
My heart will burst in twain, and I will die.

Guin. Maiden, thy tale is sad, be thy quest pure,
The queen will help thee, be thy person wronged,
By Arthur's mighty kingdom, thou art 'venged.

Elaine. Nay Madam, Elaine's love is white and pure,
And he she loves is noble as any knight
In all this kingdom. Forgive my boldness, Madam,
And by that love thou bearest to the king,
Our great lord, high Arthur, help me now,,
And bring me to the face of him I love.

Guin. Of truth, thou hast a boldness in thy love.
(*Aside.*) There is an innocence in this fair maid
Doth make me pity her, so deep in love
For some false face that made a summer toy
Of her frank passion. Yea, I pity her.

(*To Elaine.*) Maiden, to-morrow we do hold a tourney.
Thou wilt be present with us in the Court,
And thou canst note the knights and seek thy lover,
If he be 'mid the guests of noble Arthur.

Elaine. Oh thank thee, noble Madam, may kind Heaven
Bless thee in thy great wisdom to the King.

Guin. Come, Maiden, thou wilt follow in our train.

[*Exit all.*

SCENE V.—*The Court.*

*Enter VIVIEN disguised as a strange maiden, followed by
men bearing a great stone with a
sword thrust in it.*

Arthur Whence comest thou unto our Court, strange
And on what quest art thou sent? [Maiden?

Vivien. Nine days are past and gone, most noble King,
Since thou didst advertise throughout the land
The kingdom be opened for tests at Camelot
And marvellous feats might here performed be.

Wherefore I, knowing of that noble pride
With which you hold the flower of your great Court
For manhood's purity, woman's chastity,
Have deigned to show before the world, great King,
The truth whereof thou boastest.

Arthur. It is bold indeed, but Arthur keeps his word.
What be the tests?

Vivien. First, here, to test thy knighthood's purity,
We bring a sword sunk fast in yonder stone
By magic's force, and he who plucks it forth
Must be a knight who hath not known a woman,
Save in the lawful mode of marriage bed.

(To Launcelot.) Wouldst try, pure Knight?

Laun. Yea, I would, doth great Arthur will,
Though all the fiends of hell clutched nether end.
Do other knights but make the trial first.

*(A number of knights come forward, try to pull the sword
out of the stone but fail.)*

*Launcelot then places his feet on the stone and grasps the
sword and pulls with all his might, but the sword
remains fixed.)*

Arthur. It is in sooth a marvel!

Laun. It seemeth grown therein,
Yea, I will bend and strain until it comes.
It will not! *(Stands to take a breath.)*

Guin. It is enough!

Vivien. Wouldst thou try again pure Knight?

Laun. Yea I will try till I die, if it come not.
*(Tries again, bends his whole strength, then staggers to his
feet.)* Methought the earth's roots hung thereon.
I am shamed!

Arthur. 'Tis enough!

Vivien. Wilt not try again, pure Knight?

Laun. *(With set face.)* Yea, now for Camelot's glory.
Launcelot's manhood pulls on this side, Hell on that.

(*Braces himself and gives one terrible tug, then falls back fainting.*)

Elaine. 'Tis he! (*rushes out and falls fainting on his breast. The Queen's women lift her and bear her out.*)

Guin. Great Heaven!

Arthur. 'Tis enough! away with it, Maiden, thy magic hath outdone our noblest worth.

Vivien. (*Scornfully.*) Is there no pure man will make
[trial?

Gwaine. (*Emerges from the throng still dressed in scullions dress.*)

Yea, I will try, although I rend the stone.

(*Leaps on to the stone and plucks the sword out with both hands, with a great pull, and waves it aloft with an exultant shout. The throng starts back.*)

How now, mighty King?

Arthur. 'Tis a great marvel!

Laun. (*Steps forth.*) The man that hath done that must
[face Launcelot to the death,—to the death! (*Faces*
[*Gwaine and draws.*)

Guin. My God! (*Her maids support her, she hides her*
[*face in her mantle.*)

Gwaine. I would not slay thee.

Laun. Thou can'st not!—Keep you! (*they fight.*)
[*Knights try to separate them.*)

Arthur. Nay, back, more room! give them more room.
(*Continue fighting, each draws blood, but neither gives*
[*way.*)

Guin. (*Aside to the maids.*) Be he slain?

A Maid. Neither be slain, Madam.

Arthur. Enough! I say enough!

Laun. Sire!

Gwaine. Must we stop the exercise?

Arthur. It is enough, you are both brave knights.

Laun. Gwaine, thou art better than I.

Gwaine. Thou art the best I have met.
Wilt thou take the hand of Gwaine?

Laun. Yea I will, though it hath pressed me hard.

Arthur. Clear the Court. (*Trumpets blow and the throng falls back.*)

SCENE VI.—*An outer room in the Castle*—GUINEVERE walking back and forth. Enter LAUNCELOT, kneels, would take her hand.

Laun. Madam !

(*Guinevere draws back coldly.*)

Laun. Madam, what means this coldness ?
Thou wert not ever wont to meet me thus ?

Guin. Where hast thou left the maid of Astolat ?

Laun. Maid of Astolat !

Guin. Yea that frail pink-and-white that pillowed thy
What time thou did'st faint, some slim cowslip miss [breast,
Such as do flatter you strong men by their weakness.
Go flippant knight and seek your skim-milk love.
Guinevere would hate thee but for scorn.
God curse the day I ever let thee love !

Laun. Madam each word thou utterest, like a dagger,
Doth stab with cruel agonies my heart.
If Launcelot hath sinned in loving thee,
That love is maiden unto all save thee.
Yea I am damnèd daily for thy face,
And even thou dost scorn me.

Guin. A truce of words, I saw with mine own eyes,
What all the Court and all the world doth know.
Launcelot's Love, the Maid of Astolat,
Is mouthed by all fool's lips in all men's ears,
Till Guinevere is even Mordred's scorn.
I'd slay thee, were I only but a man.

Laun. Madam ! by my love ! —

Guin. By thy love, a flimsy foresworn thing,
A toylet of a moment ! Such as thou !
And I ! I gave—, By Heaven ! I pluck thee out,
And thrust thee from me, thou false handsome face !
Thou devil-eyed to lead hearts on to ruin !

Laun. Madam, wilt thou not hear ?

Guin. Nay, nay, begone ! I scorn thee, yea, I hate !

Laun. (*Sadly.*) Yea Guinevere I go, to come no more.
It is well seen that thou hast tired of me.
Thou hast driven Launcelot mad ! mad !
The world reels round me, I am all alone.
All else the visions of a noisome dream.
I am mad, mad, Guinevere !
And dost thou smile ? here's for the lonely dark !
Ho ! ho ! the world's one hideous mockery.

(*Leaps from the casement.*)

Guin. Nay, nay, Launcelot ! Launcelot !
Come back ! I love thee, I forgive thee all !
(*Falls on her face.*) Oh Heaven ! I have driven him away,
Nevermore, Oh, never to return.
O Love ! O Love ! my maddened heart will break.
O foolish stars ! why smile on this grim night
Lighting the heartless heaven with your eyes ?
O foolish birds, why pipe across the dark,
Calling the rosy morn, the false-faced morn,
While hearts are breaking here amid the dark ?
Launcelot ! Launcelot ! Hark ! he returns.
Nay, 'tis the foolish wind wooing the silly trees.
He never will return, nor will forgive.
O poor white hand ! he nevermore will clasp,
O wayward lips ! he nevermore will kiss.
O heart, break ! break !
(*Enter a maid.*) Madam, here cometh the King.

(*Guin. Rises.*)

Arthur. Madam, watchest thou alone the splendor of the
[night. ?

Guin. Yea, there is a burden in the distant sea,
And a soft sadness from the far-off night
Of ghost-winds footing under the haunted dark.
It groweth chill, my Lord.

Arthur. We will go within. (*Exit both.*)

Enter GWAIN and DAGONET.

Gwaine. Yea, mad ! mad ! stark raving mad, you say ?

Dagonet. Yea, mad. His eyes were like balls 'o fire.
An' his face fixed like he followed a vision,
Or walked 'i his sleep.
An' his hands did beat the air the while he shouted a war song.
It hath frightened me out of a week's sleep.

Gwaine. Yea, he is indeed mad. 'Tis this crazy love.
And he such a man, the best 'i the world.
I will take horse and follow him.
Drop that lanthorn, Fool, and help me wi' this buskin,
'Tis new to me. The best 'i the world, damn this love !
Fool, wert thou ever in love ?

Dagonet. Yea, thou knowest I be a fool.

Gwaine. Then be wise like Gwaine, Fool, and scorn love;
'Tis but a mad fever 'o the head and marrow.
It creepeth in by the eyes and spoileth a good man.
It killeth sleep and maketh a mock at feeding.
It heateth the blood and routeth caution.
'Ware of love, Fool, an' thou would'st be wise.

Dagonet. Yea, thy words be like what the wind said to
[the wall.

Gwaine. And what be that ?

Dagonet. Stand up while I blow thee down !
Art thou off now ?

Gwaine. Yea, till I find him.
Tell the King Gwaine hath ta'en French leave, but he will
come again when he bringeth the best man 'i the King-
[dom.

Ho ! without there ! Fool, go ahead with that lanthorn.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE VII.—*Enter VIVIEN and MORDRED.*

Vivien. Prince, and do you weaken now again ?

Mordred. Yea, Vivien, I have only half a heart
For this damned business.

Vivien. 'Tis but a lack of manhood in thy blood,
That runs to water dwelling on puerile things,
Like parent-love and other sickly longings,
Forgotten with forgetting of the paps.
Now me, my memory knows no parentage
Save circumstance and mine own nimble wits.
'Tis but our acts that build the bridge of fate
Across this perilous river men call life.
Some kneel and pray, trust some fond deity,
And build in fancy safety for themselves,
Then soon are churning 'mid the ravening flood.
Others do build them piers of solid stone,
Or use men's bodies for to tread upon.
These get the surest over.—Hast seen the Queen ?

Mordred. Ha, that one name hath more to conjure with
Than all your sophistries, to my dark soul.
Yea, how I hate that woman ! I am but
The hideous toad that poisons on her sight.
Though I may sense the glories of this earth
With all its wealth, the heaven o'er-bridged with stars,
And know love's heights and depths, and pity's well,
Brimming with pearls of tears and woman's eyes ;
I am but hideous Mordred after all.

Vivien. Yea, in her eyes art hideous, not in mine.

Mordred. Woman, thou liest ! It were natural
To love the perfect shape and noble form,
The sunny face and splendid laughing eye ;
But canst thou love the wry and gnarled shape
And beetle-browed, night-shaded soul like mine ?

I am a toad, a bat, a gnarled stump.
These hideous in nature are my kin.
Woman, thou liest, when thou speakest of love !

Vivien. Nay, Mordred, do not scorn me ! Thou 'rt a man
In more than mere out-seeming, 'tis thy fate
Thy whole grim spirit Vivien pitieth.
Would'st thou but love me, Vivien would be
Thy queen, thy slave, the 'venger of thy wrongs,
That call to heaven.

Mordred. Nay, nay, it cannot be, thou wastest words.
I like thee least in this strange mood of thine.
Love is no word for Mordred, rather hate,
And thou wert made for plottings, not for joys.
Yea, we will marry in compact of ill,
And will beget as child, black, black revenge.
This is my mood.

Vivien. Now thou art natural, there is much to do.
Our schemes o'er-reached, proud Arthur's jealousy
As yet untouched, and Launcelot fled the Court
In some queer madness. How likest the conditions ?

Mordred. He must come back, I am a devil at root.
We'll seethe him in the Queen's despairs and sorrows.
I have a plan,—she giveth soon a feast
Of autumn fruits unto her favorite knights,
And I will go, although she hates my face,
For I misdoubt she fears me even now.
There is a joy to know, if thou art not loved,
That thou canst wield an influence over those
Who otherwise would pass thee by in scorn.
Well I do know a poison, subtle, sharp,
That when it bites it is the tooth of death.
This will I get inserted in some fruit,
And manage that one knight will eat of it,
Sir Patrise, brother unto that Sir Mador ;
Who hates the Queen for that she scorned his love
And not being present will call for loud revenge
Upon his brother's death 'gainst Guinevere

Proud Arthur, then, will call upon some knight
To prove her innocence upon the sword,
And her extremity makes Launcelot sane.
He will return, then I will trap him with her,
Set Arthur and Launcelot at bitter war,
And wrest the kingdom from their weakened hands.
This is my plot, now for the working of it.
Down all compunction ! Mount all dark resolves !
Let me be Mordred inward as well as out,
All inky poison of soul, even that I,
Who'd trample others, must crush out myself.

Vivien. Yea, Prince, indeed, 'tis seen thou hast a mind
Of subtle working fit to rule a King.
Thou wilt be greater than great Arthur yet,
When thou sittest in his place.

Mordred. Nay woman, tantalize me not with hopes.
'Tis not the splendid end that leads me on.
'Tis but the getting there that Mordred loves.
The mood of one who'd trample on the flowers
In some fair garden whence he is excluded.
Here is the poison. That will be thy part
To get it hidden in the special fruit,
And get it fed unto the special man,
Whose snuffing out will pander to our end.

Vivien. Give me the poison !

Mordred. Here it is, this small pill,
So petty, but powerful.
'Tis wondrous that this tiny polished globe,
Could hide betwixt the finger and the thumb,
Hath power to open the gateways of this world,
And in a sudden sleep dislodge a soul.
Hast thou an agent for to do this work ?

Vivien. Yea, that I have.

Mordred. Not the fool again ?

Vivien. Yea, the fool !

Mordred. See he doth this better than the last. 'Tis the
[more perilous. Thinkest he will undertake it?

Vivien. Yea, he will.

Mordred. By what compulsion?

Vivien. By that most powerful of all most powerful com-
[pulsions. He loveth me.

Mordred. And thou wilt use him, put him on the rack,
Which is thine influence?

Vivien. See my little finger, he is as the yarn
That I may wind around it.

Mordred. Thōu art a Devil! Ho! Ho! Mordred hath
[mirth!
And this be life! Mordred hath mirth, yea, Vivien, mirth!
See woman that thou failest not,
Mordred is roused, it must be.

[*Exit MORDRED.*

Vivien. Ho! Ho! Thou art travelling my road at last.
I must haste from hence and find Dagonet.

SCENE VIII.—*Enter* DAGONET.

Dagonet. I'm but the ghost of mine old former self,
Who once a jester, am now but the jest
Of some outrageous fortune. Sleep hath fled,
My meat hath no more taste unto my mouth.
The wine but heavy lees within the cup.
I am so held in love for Vivien,
That I must end this foolish spark o' life.
My heart leaps up for joy to see her face,
A silly joy, such as a child might have,
Loving some star for plaything, out of reach.
Oh what would I not do to even dare
To press the velvet of her dainty hand!
Back, down, poor foolish dreams! Now I must play
The frothy merriment of a world that's grey.

(*Sings.*)

There may be poison in the cup
But still the foam must cling.
To keep the strong world's courage up
Poor fools must laugh and sing ;
With sobs below and smiles above,
Amasking day by day,
On trampled, bleeding hopes of love.
So whirls the world away !

There may be breaking of the heart
Though merry laughs the eye.
Still we poor fools must act our part,
And laugh, and weep, and die.
Still must we sportive battles wage,
With foam of lightsome breath,
While underneath the currents rage
And wrecks are churned to death.

Enter VIVIEN, DAGONET starts.

Vivien. Thou growest grewsome, Dagonet ; where hast
[lost thy mirth ?

Dagonet. I know not, Vivien, I know not, belike I am a
[fool indeed. Poor Dagonet is no more himself.

Vivien. Poor Dagonet.

Dagonet. Why not call me fool, dost thou pity me ?

Vivien. Yea, I do.

Dagonet. And since when ?

Vivien. Since I knew that thou wert a man.

Dagonet. Dagonet, the fool, a man ?

Vivien. Yea since I knew as thou couldst love indeed.

Dagonet. That I love, Vivien, what knowest thou ?

Vivien. Yea, that thou hast a heart under thy mask. Yea,
[more, for whom thou hast this feeling. Wouldst thou
[win her grace ?

Dagonet. (*Falls on his knees.*) Yea, yea, Vivien, for one
[look, one smile. Oh Vivien, well thou knowest I am
thy slave.

Vivien. What would'st thou do for my love?

Dagonet. Thou hast my heart bare in thy sight. Write
[on it what characters thou likest, for I am thine. I
tell thee I am thy dog, thy slave.

Vivien. Not dog, nor slave, but lover. (*Vivien holds out
her hand, Dagonet crawls near and takes it.*)

Dagonet. Oh Vivien, dost thou mean this?

Vivien. Yea, in sooth I will try thy love. Would'st thou
[win my love Dagonet?

Dagonet. Dost thou mock me?

Vivien. Nay. (*Takes a little box from her girdle and
opens it.*) Dost see this pill? (*Leans near and
whispers in his ear. Dagonet starts back.*) Nay! nay! not
[that!

Vivien. That or nought!

Dagonet. Wouldst thou use me thus?

Vivien. Thou art the man who'd win my love! I tell thee
[so must all who'd love Vivien.

Dagonet. Nay, nay, I must think. This is indeed death,
[death.

Vivien. Yea, death or nought! I thought thou wert a
[man?

Dagonet. For that reason am I now in hell.

Vivien. (*Takes his hand.*) Dagonet, dost thou love me?

Dagonet. Oh God! Yea Vivien, give me the pill, I am
[not myself any more. I am thine, I will do it. Vivien,
[thou wilt not fail me?

Vivien. See that thou dost not fail me, and be sure that
[thou doest this well.

Dagonet. I will.

[*Exit Vivien*

Dagonet. At last Dagonet thou hast thy wish, and hast
[crossed the barrier that separates comedy from dark
Dagonet, now thou art a man ! [tragedy.
Thou art pitied ! Thou canst win love.
Thou canst snuff the candle out o' a life.
Dost know thy features any more ? And all for love !

(*Sings.*)

O Love, that lights this world
Yet leaves us i' the dark ;—
I led thee to my couch,
A grave-cloth was thy sark !
O Love, we would be clothed,
And thou hast left us stark.

Yea, I am on fire. Snow ! snow ! Would I had snow to cool
[me.
Fool, thou art no more a fool. Dagonet, thou art a man !
Thou lovest. This must be done. (*Goes out.*)
[*Curtain.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—ARTHUR, MORDRED, DAGONET, and Nobles.

Enter the QUEEN in great trouble.

Enter KNIGHTS bringing in a dead body and crying Treason!
Treason !

(*The Queen takes her State.*)

Arthur. Who would accuse the Queen ?

Sir Mador. 'Tis I, my Liege.

Arthur. What be the substance of thine accusation ?

Sir Mador. Murder ! Sire, murder ! most foul and
[treacherous !

Other Knights. Yea, murder, foul and treacherous !

Arthur. On whom ?

Sir Mador. On the body of this knight, my brother, Sir Patrise, whom thou knowest to have been a courteous knight of much steadfastness to thee and the Court.

Arthur. It is most strange. Relate the circumstances.

Sir Mador. 'Twas at the banquet, Sir King, where we all invited of thy Queen, the Madam Guinevere, who sitteth there, and after meat, she with much courtesy of seeming, did press on us to partake of some fruit, the which on partaking of, my brother, this dead knight, did fall in agony so extreme and mortal; that his soul went out, and now he lieth as thou see'st him.

Other Knights. Yea, 'tis true, 'tis as he saith, a most foul
[and damnable murder.

Arthur. (*Turns to the queen.*) Madam, what sayest thou
[to this accusation?

Guin. 'Tis a false foul lie. I am innocent of this deed.

Dagonet. (*Aside.*) Yea, 'tis true!

Arthur. Thou see'st this dead knight here and these witnesses, as I am King I must see justice, even against
Hast thou no other defence to offer? [thee.

Guin. Nay, my lord, as I am the Queen, 'tis a most damnable lie. 'Fore Heaven, I am innocent of this strange murder.

Dagonet. (*Aside.*) Now is my soul in flames!

Sir Mador. According to our ancient laws, when a guest dies in this most suspicious manner, where proof of grievous intent is present, the accused is condemned to be burnt at the stake.

Guin. Great Heaven!

Arthur. 'Tis a foul punishment.

Sir Mador. But for a foul crime.

Other Knights. Yea, 'tis but justice.

Arthur. There is also a trial.

Mordred. Yea, Sire, the accused being a woman must

have a knight to prove her innocence by his body on the body of the accuser ere the time of death be accomplished.

Arthur. Then be it so. The law must follow on the weight of these many witnesses. (*Turning to the Queen.*) Guinevere, Queen of Britain, I believe thee guiltless of the crime whereof thou art accused, as thou hast said. As King I am not free to prove thine innocence with my body, but as the King, unless thou procurest a knight to assoil thee ere the time appointed, I here condemn thee to be taken hence to a place of public note and there be burnt to death, as the law requireth.

Guin. Oh Great Heaven! (*Falls in a swoon.*)

Arthur. Sir knight, art thou satisfied?

Sir Mador. Yea, on my body.

Arthur. Then clear the Court. [*Exit Knights.*
Madam, this is the heaviest hour of all my life.

Guin. (*Supported by her ladies.*) Yea, my lord, thou
[wilt save me?

Arthur. That I will, in all justice. Ho, there, without!

Enter a Page.

Bring me Sir Hake on the instant. (*Enter SIR HAKE.*)

Arthur. I command that this stern sentence on the body of the noble Queen be proclaimed widely, and that messengers be sent, on pain of death, to find Sir Gwaine and Sir Launcelot, that if they be not procured here within the present month, that the messengers pay the penalty with their bodies.

Sir Hake. Yea Sire, it will be done. [*Exit.*

Arthur. And thou, my Queen, retire to your apartments, I will come shortly to you. Keep up thy heart, as thou art innocent so will Heaven help thee.

Guin. Yea, my Lord, thou wilt save me, as I am innocent.

[*Exit GUINEVERE and her ladies.*

Arthur. Ho, Page, bring wine, (*aside*) I would forget my
 Bring wine ! I say, and send hither my fool ! [sorrow.
 [Exit Page.]

Enter DAGONET.

Arthur. Fool, I would forget my heaviness. Make me
 [merry.]

Dagonet. (*Aside.*) Oh God ! (*To the King.*) Yea, Sire,
 [what would'st thou have ?]

Arthur. Some music.

Dagonet. Yea, Sire. (*Sings.*)

Blue is the summer morning's sky,
 And birds are glad and merry.
 And Anna's eyes are sweet and sly,
 Her cheeks like any cherry ;--
 Her lips like dewy rosbuds are
 Upon the gladsome morning.
 She is my love, my heart's glad star,
 In spite of all her scorning.

So fill the cup of gladness up
 And drink to youth and morning.
 Let sadness go with evening sup,
 I'm hers for all her scorning.

Arthur. Would I had thy merry heart, Fool.

Dagonet. Yea, Sire !

SCENE II.—LAUNCELOT *discovered seated almost naked*
amid swineherds.

(LAUNCELOT *sings.*)

Once there was a castle hall,
 Fair, fair to see,
 Armored dight, and splended all,
 Filled with shout o' revelry.
 Came the hosts o' fate and rage
 Thundered on its walls amain.
 Sunken now like ruined age,

Never laughs its light again.
I loved a Queen and she loved me.
Aye, that were long ago !
Come now wrack, come now woe,
Strike now lightning, beat now snow !
Memory, I'll ha' none o thee !

Ha ! ha ! Cowards, who'll fight ? (*rises*). Ha ! Ha !

Enter a Knight.

Knight. Who be this ?

1st Swineherd. Him be mad though him hurt us not, for
[us be soft wi' him, him tend a' swine.

2nd Swineherd. Him mun fight, but us not answer. Him
[be o'er hulk a man twa hanle a staff.

Laun. Winds are cold and flowers are dead. All is past,
[past !

Knight. Ho there, who be thou ?

Laun. 'Tis an old world, an old, old world. I tell thee truth,
I loved a Queen, but that be long past.

Knight. His wits be dull.—Who art thou fellow ?

Laun. It hath been never Summer this many a year.
[Can'st tell me why ?

Knight. 'Tis Summer now, thou Fool !

Laun. Nay nay, 'tis but Winter. I loved a Queen——

Knight. Oh, damn thy Queen ! who art thou ?

Laun. Yea, damn all Queens, I am with thee, Friend,—
[wilt thou fight ?

Knight. Not with thee.

Laun. Damn thee ! thou wilt !

Knight. I tell thee I wont.

Laun. Then damn thee ! take that ! (*Knocks him down.*)

Knight. Oh ! oh ! I am murdered !

Laun. More ! more !

Enter GWAINÉ.

Gwaine. Ha, at last, it seemeth !

1st Swineherd. Have care, Master ! Him be dread.

Gwaine. How long hath he been like this ?

2nd Swineherd. 'Tis some time ago. At first him did
An' bite hisselt, but him be better now. [tear the earth

Laun. I chased the moon the silly moon,
Ahind a willard tree.
I knocked the stars like nine-pins down,
One, two, three.

I loved a Queen. Ha ! ha ! 'tis Winter.

Gwaine. And this be he, the best o' Arthur's Court,
A ragged ninny, mouthing wanton froth,
The sport o' pig-folk, this be love's good work,
Oh Love ! thou hast much to answer !

1st Swineherd. Him want allus twa foight.

Gwaine. Yea, he spoileth for a bout, 'tis often a right cure.
I will try it, God give it may bring him round.
(*To LAUNCELOT.*) Ho there, Fellow !

Laun. Ho thyself, Windbag. Thou hast a fine voice,
Can'st thou call back memory ? [Friend.

Gwaine. Yea I can.

Laun. Can'st thou find Spring time ? I loved, I loved,—

Gwaine. Oh damn love—dost thou know me ?

Laun. Know thee ? know thee ? I know thou art a man.
[Wilt thou fight, Friend ?

Gwaine. With a merry good will.

Laun. Then lets to 't.

Gwaine. (*Takes a quarter staff, they fight hard and long.*)
GWAINÉ belabors LAUNCELOT on the head, back and
[shoulders.

Laun. Ha, it raineth thoughts now. Come on Hell,
[come on.

Gwaine. Yea, am I coming, (*hits him harder.* If I beat that damned love out o' him I will do him a good deed. How's that and that?

Laun. And that, and that. (*Both fight till exhausted.*)

Gwaine. Launcelot, dost know thyself now?

Laun. Methinks I partly do, under a cloud.

Gwaine. And dost thou know me?

Laun. Methinks thou art the moon.

Gwaine. Damn, this love! If I be the moon thou shalt find me no honeymoon, (*hits him again,*) (*they fight fiercer.*

Laun. Come on, thou art welcome. Oh!

Gwaine. Well, dost thou know me yet?

Laun. Methinks thou art one named Gwaine. Oh my
[bones!

Gwaine. Be this Winter?

Laun. I be warm now.

Gwaine. An dost thou love a Queen?

Laun. What mean'st thou?

Gwaine. I would rid thee of this damned love.

Laun. Then wouldst thou rid me of this life. Gwaine, thou art a noble soul, but thou can'st not do that.

Gwaine. Art thou thyself now?

Laun. Methinks I am—Yea I have been mad.

Gwaine. Yea and I have cured thee. Come, this be no
Let us go. [place.
[Exit both.

SCENE III.—*Another part of the forest.*—LAUNCELOT and
GWAINÉ.

Gwaine. Launcelot, thou art a fool. Thou art the King's

man, and the best. Thou hast an arm and a sword on it. Thou must come. I will no longer here.

Laun. I may not, this hurt be too deep.

Gwaine. Damn thy hurt, man ! thou art sound as I.

Laun. 'Tis a deep hurt, Launcelot fights no more. Here will I die.

Gwaine. Better go a Monk, thou art a fool, Man. This love is a girl's folly. Fighting is a man's trade and his sword his true mistress. Gwaine will have no other. Come, thou art not dead yet.

Laun. Aye Gwaine thou wastest words, Launcelot is ended.

Gwaine. Damn thee ! I gave my word I would bring thee, will I have to go foresworn else carry thee on my back. Have I cured thy madness but for this ?

Laun. Nay, nay, make peace best thou canst. Thou art a good fellow, but I cannot. Launcelot will die here.

Gwaine. I say, damn thee, thou shalt come !

Laun. Thou liest ! (*both spring to their feet and draw.*)
(*Trumpets without.*) (*Enter the KING'S Messengers.*)

Gwaine. Who comes ?

Mess. From the King.

Gwaine. What want ye ?

Mess. We seek two knights, Sir Launcelot and Sir Gwaine.

Gwaine. We be thy men—what be thy message ?

Mess. The King desireth thee in great haste, the Queen be in great peril.

Laun. Nay !

Mess. Yea, of her life. She be condemned to the stake if a knight assail her not with his body on her accuser tomorrow noon.

Laun. Dread Heaven !

Gwaine. What be the accusation ?

Mess. Murder on the body of Sir Patrise.

Laun. Enough ! hast thou brought horses ?

Mess. Yea.

Laun. Then quick ! on your lives ! lead us hence !

[*Exit* LAUNCELOT and Messengers.]

Gwaine. The foul fiend take this love ! It be a queer sickness indeed. Anon it made him like to luke water, and now he be all fire. It bloweth now up now down, like the wind i' a chimney. Yea I love that man like a father his child. There is no sword like to his i' the whole kingdom. An' a wench that be a queen leadeth him like a goss-hawk. (*Voices without.*)

Yea, I am coming.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.—(*Enter Court-ushers with trumpets, Soldiers and Knights. Enter the KING : takes his State. Enter the QUEEN in a black robe surrounded by her Women, comes to the foot of the Throne, falls on her face.*)

Guin. Arthur, thou wilt save me ?

Arthur. My Queen, as the king I may not. My heart is
Put thy trust in Heaven. [hell.]

Guin. 'Tis a dread death.

Arthur. Madam, could Arthur save thee he would. If thou diest so doth my joy in this world—keep thy heart.

Guin. 'Fore God, I am innocent.

Arthur. Thou must trust to Heaven.

Guin. That I do. (*rises and takes her state.*)

Court Chamberlain. Guinevere, Queen of Britain, of this dread crime whereof thou art accused what hast thou to say ?

Guin. (Rises) That I Guinevere, Queen of Britain, am innocent of this most foul charge of which I am here accused, and here call on Heaven to prove on the body of that foul knight mine accuser.

Marshalls enter and trumpets are blown.

Court-Chamberlain. Doth no knight assoil the Queen?

Guin. Heaven help me !

Arthur. Do no knights approach ?

Page. Nay, Sire.

Arthur. Then has the hour of my life's sorrow come.

Enter SIR MADOR doffs to the KING.

Sir Mador. Sire, the time hath almost passed and I demand a knight to do no battle, or that the Queen be burnt.

Guin. (Aside) Merciful Heaven !

Arthur. (To the Page) Do none come ?

Page. Nay, Sire.

Dagonet. Were I not bound to Vivien body and soul, I would state the truth. Nay I am accursed. There is but one way. *(staggers to the front of the throne the throng presses back in wonder.)*

Dagonet. (Kneels) Sire !

Arthur. (in voice of thunder.) Well fool ?

Dagonet. Didst thou not once make me a knight ?

Arthur. Yea, in a moment of jest.

Dagonet. Then would I take this gage !

Guin. Nay, nay, death, death, but not this insult !
What base knight of this court hath prompted this ?

Dagonet. None, none my Lady, 'tis my wish.

Arthur. Take him out ! Now is Arthur shamed !

Knights hurry. DAGONET out.

Dagonet. (Aside) Now is Hell indeed my portion.

Guin. Sire, I would now die.

Arthur. Yea, my Queen, so would Arthur.

Sir Mador. Sire, the time be up. And, I, as the accuser, now ask that thou, as King, wilt command that Guinevere, Queen of Britain, who standeth there, be taken from hence and burnt till she be dead.

A commotion without, LAUNCELOT rushes in draws and
[*faces SIR MADOR.*

Laun. And I say, nay!

[*Curtain.*

SCENE V.—*Enter MORDRED.*

Mordred. Now cursed be the womb that gave me birth!
Thrice cursed be the paps that gave me suck!
That I but made for hellish plots and hates,
And inky thoughts and moods and black despairs,
The most unhappy man in this dread world,
Should house in me a dream of womanhood
Such as doth dwell in all the milk-white glory
And glamored stateliness of Arthur's Queen.
Yea would I now forego all I hold dear
In this life and the next, if such there be,
My chance of Heaven thrust to darkest Hell,
One hour like Launcelot to know her love.
Hell! Hell! I laugh at Hell, such flames I burn
Would scorch the northern ice-seas in their beds.
So deep a hell I hold me in my thoughts
Of madness for her love.—Yea I am turned
A very subtle Satan that will plot
High Arthur's downfall, Launcelot's banishment,
And all the ruin of this present kingdom.
Yea, I will be a King and perch a crown
In its unsteady poisons on this brow,
So that by very glamor of my power
And inner majesty of mine iron soul,
I build in her a fancy for my person.

For I am Mordred, in this hour I'm great
In subtle cunning far beyond these days
Of mere brute strength and stature physical.—
Yea I was born upon an evil time
Of evil parentage of sin and shame
Thrice cursed in the inner soul and form,
What sportive fate gave me the gifts I bear ?
But I am willed to use them to my use.
Yea I will use all deviltries and lies,
All plots and counter-plots to gain mine end.
This misbegotten now doth hold the key
To this doomed kingdom.

Enter VIVIEN.

We are well met. Thou art upon the hour.
The plot grows closer to our waited end.
The net is weaving closer mesh by mesh
That traps the leopard and the lioness.
I have by long connivance, secret planned,
Built round me many knights who hold my weal,
Jealous of Launcelot and Arthur's glory.
These will be with me when the stroke comes down.
A thousand swords will leap their scabbard mouths
At shout of Mordred ! Yea a thousand throats
Will cry me King when my fate topples Arthur.

Vivien. Now art thyself, this be thy natural mood.
Yea Mordred when thou kingest it, there will be
A splendid thralldom to true kingliness.
For thou wilt sink a terror in men's hearts
Of King's prerogatives will make them fear
The very sound and rumor of thy name.
And there will go before thee waves of will
Presaging thunders of thy royal coming.
But wilt thou then, my Lord, remember Vivien,
When thou dost come unto thy royalty,
Her who did place thy footsteps in the way
That led thee to these gateways of success,
And bade thee trample on thy youthful fears,

And doubts and milksop fancies of the mind,
And gave into thy hand an iron mace,
And bade thee use it? Wilt thou think on her,
The only one who loved thee for thyself,
The single soul that knew thee in the dark,
And loved thee for thy nobler qualities?

Mordred. What wouldst thou have me promise?

Vivien. I would be a Queen!

Mordred. Ha! thou climbest high!

Be careful or thy stairway

In toppling over carry thee to Hell. (*aside*)

This be her trend I must match cunning with cunning,
And tie this serpent in her venom'd coils.

Were she a man, I would admire her much,

But not as woman! She be Mordred's Queen,

When Queen of women there be one Guinevere!

(*To VIVIEN*) When I am King thou wouldst then be the
Queen?

'Tis a daring thought!

Vivien. Not more than that thou bearest,
That Mordred, squat and monster, lorn, despised,
Misgotten, friendless save to such as me,
Should rise in dreams to heights of Arthur's glory,
And even lust to bed with Guinevere.

Mordred. What now? Thou devil!

Vivien. Ha! Now I stabbed thy longings to the quick,
And probed thine ink-heart.—Thou dost love the Queen,
Thou, who doth dwell so far below her scorn!

Mordred. Witch-hag or Devil! Wert thou but a man,
And I would quickly send thee to that hell
Where thou belongest.

Vivien. Nay, I fear thee not.
I am too much a part of all thy plans
For thee to quarrel with. Stab me and thou stabbest
The life of all thy longings. Let my blood,
And with it flows the making of thy dreams.

Mordred. (Aside) 'Tis as she says. She's woven in my
And I must keep her, devil though she be. [web
Yea, Mordred ! Mordred ! (*To VIVIEN.*)
Vivien thou art hasty,
In dreaming Mordred would do thee an evil.
'Twas but the sudden mantling of the blood.
Yea, I indeed do owe thee overmuch,
And Mordred will pay thee with what gratitude
Of words and acts as such as he possesses.
Yea, when my mind dwells on the what I was,
And that which I now am, an admiration
Sudden and great, comes o'er me at the change,
And the swift transformation thou hast made.
Thou took'st a youth from out his sickly longings,
Vague undefined with musings on this world,
And sick with evil of a shadowed fate,
Dried up his kindness, showed him he was iron,
And gave the keys of cruelty to his hand
Wherewith to pick the lock of this poor kingdom.
Yea, I am wrapt in admiration vast.
Then I would shudder did an evil thought,
Wandering vaguely through my caverned mind,
But stop and grin me. Now it seems mine act
Would neck and neck with Hell's most foul desire.
Yea, thou hast right in pride of workmanship
In building from material thou hadst
So deft a moulded villain to thy hand.
Yea, Vivien, fear not Mordred will forget,
When every waking moment on his bed,
And every devil knocking on his sill,
Mindeth him of cause for gratitude.

Vivien. Wilt thou promise ?

Mordred. Nay, I will never promise !
What right have I for pledges in this world,
Save pledge that I will topple all to ruin.
This give I Fate, as sure as I am Mordred.
I tell thee, Woman, I am thy slave no more,
Nor slave to any, be it man or devil.

Vivien. What art thou then ?

Mordred. I am thy master. Thou wilt be my slave,
Thou cunning plotter, schemer to my hand,
To be my dagger, poison, flaming brand,
My very slave, convenience, creature, tool ;
And if thou art not, I'll trample, trample thee.
I tell thee I will thrust this kingship out ;
Will spin these actors round my crooked thumb,
Until this devil Mordred walketh king.
Little didst thou dream, what demon thou wert raising,
When thou didst conjure Mordred.

Vivien. Darest thou me ?

Mordred. Yea, look into my glass and ask thyself,
What Mordred hath in life to hope or fear ?
But I do tell thee, Woman, Mordred in hell
Will be no tortured creature spinning round,
But himself the very devil.
To show my power of evilment, I tell thee,
I know thy fatal liking for myself.
'Tis the one part of thee that now can suffer,
The only part of thee that holdeth good.

Vivien. Nay, I will not hearken.

MORDRED (*siezes her wrist.*) I'll bind thee on the rack as
[thou hast me,
Or rather finding me there, stretched my sorrows,
And show thee all the devil thou hast roused.
Then hear me, I do scorn that love of thine ;
Do trample on, despise, as I do thee !

Vivien. (*Falls on her face.*) Nay Mordred, thou breakest
Nay, curse me not. [my heart,

Mordred. Yea, ask the rack for mercy when it racks,
Or seek for honey in the aspick's sting !
Yea, more, I tell thee plainly to thy face,
Guinevere makes hell within my breast,
And thou, my slave, wilt help me to her arms.

Vivien. One little smile, one little word of peace.

Mordred. Nay, silence, or a curse! Wilt thou do this?

Vivien. Thou knowest I will, let me but touch thy hand!
Trampled on, despised, I love thee still.

Mordred. Now to the point, Launcelot goes this night
To secret assignation with the Queen,
This saving of her life hath patched their quarrel,
And thou must find for me the hour of meeting,
Must intercept the trusted messenger,
And bring me secret knowledge of the time.
I go now with some knights unto the King,
To force his leave for this our undertaking,
And put their secret love to open shame.
Thou must watch near the apartments of the Queen,
And take by fraud or force knowledge of the hour,
And bring it to my ears with thy best speed.

Vivien. Yea, I will. [*Exit* MORDRED.
He hath read true, I am his slave at last,
Aye, what a splendid devil he doth make,
There is no man like him in all this world.
I'll see him crowned, climb he there o'er my body.

[*Curtain*

SCENE VI.—*An audience room in the Castle. Enter*
MORDRED, SIR AGRAVAINE *and other* Knights.

Mordred. 'Tis a delicate business we be come upon,
Though one of grave importance, therefore I
Will stand i' the background, thou Sir Agravaine,
Being a kinsman not o' the sinister side,
May speak the plainer. Let it fall on me.
Yea, I will answer with my body here.

Sir Ag. Yea, I will put it plainly to the King,
And show the evil placed upon our house,
And that foul insult tendered King and kingdom,
By overbearing Launcelot and the Queen.

Other Knights. Yea, we are with you.

Enter a Page.

Sir Ag. We would see the King.

Exit Page, enter ARTHUR.

Arthur. What means this sudden assembling of knights
At this strange hour ?

Sir Ag. We would bring a matter to thy hearing, King,
Of grave import unto thyself and us
Of thine own household, who'd uphold thy pride.
Yea, one affecting the dignity of this land.

Arthur. What be this matter ?

Sir Ag. The matter is one which toucheth thine own
And hath to do with Launcelot and the Queen. [honor,

Arthur. Dost thou insult thy King ? (*draws*)

Sir Ag. Nay, thou dost insult thyself and us,
Dost thou not listen !

Other Knights. Yea, King, 'tis true.

Arthur. 'Tis treason, damnable treason 'gainst my Queen,
'Gainst myself and 'gainst this noble kingdom.

Sir Ag. Wilt thou hear me, King ?

Other Knights. Yea, hear him.

Arthur. Then I will hear thee further, but 'tis plain,
You prove this on your bodies to the death.
If this strange lie be not as true as Heaven,
Each man who thinks this damned treason dies !

Knights. 'Tis just King, we will prove it on our bodies.

Sir Ag. We think, Lord Arthur, thou art over-blind
To certain things that compromise thine honor,
And some of us have reason to suspect
Sir Launcelot holdeth commerce with the Queen.

Arthur. Stop ! Catiff !

Sir Ag. Wilt thou not hear it ?

Arthur. Have ye forgotten that my name is Arthur ?
Or is this nobleness a vanished dream ?
'Tis damnable !

Sir Ag. We would prove this same upon our bodies,
By taking of them in the very act.

Arthur. No more ! by heaven, no more ! I say, no more !
Or by my crown, I'll cleave thy catiff tongue,
And spatter thine evil brains on yonder pavement,
That dared impeach my royalty of such dis-honor.

Sir Ag. Nay, King, we will die for the truth of this matter.

Knights. Yea, Lord Arthur, we are so prepared.

Arthur. Nay, ye are mad, blind, besotted mad.

Sir Ag. Nay, King, here is Sir Mordred who will show
The truth whereof we speak. [MORDRED comes forward.

Arthur. Ha ! And it is thou that art at the bottom o' this
matter !

Mordred. Sire, I would but do my duty to this kingdom,
And to the honor of your kingly place.

Sir Agravaine is over-blunt in speech,
And speaketh sudden on a cruel matter ;
Yet he hath but the right in this grave question,
Nor doth dishonor thee in this respect
More than do any of these royal knights,
But rather would show wherein thine honor lieth.
If dishonor lies therein, it doth not lie
On them who'd prove the evilment suspected,
But rather on those who by their treasonable act
Hath brought this shame upon us. It would seem
That thou dost love Sir Launcelot even more
Than the unsullied honor of thy Queen.

Arthur. Nay ! Speak no more ! Thou hast insulted
If but one thousandth part of this be true, [Arthur.
Then is great Arthur's glory brought to ground.

Mordred. Sire !

Arthur. No more of words ! What wouldst thou have me
[do ?

Mordred. Sire, we would that thou give the opportunity
To prove the cruel substance of our coming

By taking the doers in the very act,
And trapping Launcelot in the Queen's apartment.

Arthur. Go on ! Death ! Speak on ! Accursed me !

Mordred. If thou wilt go abroad this coming night,
And advertise thy going, and grant to us
Sufficient knights to make the matter proof,
We will fulfil this matter with our lives.

Knights. We will.

Arthur. And it hath come to this !

Mordred. Sire, wilt thou grant this ?

Arthur. Yea, I will grant it, but by Arthur's honor,
The knight returning from such vile ambushment
Without full proof unto the open world
Of that which spills the sea of Arthur's glory,
Shall die the foulest death this kingdom lends !
On this condition only do you go.

Mordred. Yea, we accept the conditions.

Knights. Yea, we do. [*Curtain.*

SCENE VII.—*A passage near the Queen's apartments.*

Enter VIVIEN.

Vivien. Now slave but do the bidding of thy master,
And soon the boding hour will draw anigh
When Guinevere will queen a royal hunch-back.
Now serve me well my wits until I play
The issue of this matter to my mind.

[*Retires into an alcove.*

Enter UNID the QUEEN'S Maid, with a ring.

Now drat that page ! What can the matter be ?
This ring must go but who will be the bearer,
It bothereth me to discover ?

[*Passes out on left.*

Enter DAGONET on right.

Dagonet. O me ! me ! me ! that ever I did that deed.
(*To Spirit*) Nay ! nay ! Spirit, come not here !
Hide, hide that woeful face. Sleep, sleep
Quiet 'i the grave ! Dagonet meant it not.
Ha ! ha ! I'll laugh and be merry. 'Tis but my wits.
I'll think on Vivien.—Nay, nay, not that face !
I slew thee not, Away ! away !
'Tis but a fancy but it lifts the hair
In frosty bristles, makes the eyeballs stare,
And turns me to a horror. Away ! Away !

Re-enter Maid.

What play is now, Sir Fool, that thy wit playeth ?

Dagonet. Oh ! tis thou !

Unid. 'Tis said that thou art looking at the Queen,
And wouldst oust Sir Launcelot. Thou art a bold fool.

Dagonet. Nay, nay; tis thou sweet Unid rendeth my heart.

Unid. Now art thou a kind fool.

Dagonet. Is the Queen within ?

Unid. She sleepeth.

Dagonet. I will sing thee a song. (*Sings.*)

“ It rose upon the month o' May,
When woods were filled with laughter,
Came Margery tripping up the way,
And Jock a stealing after.

(*To spirit.*) Away ! away !

It rose in Autumn's afternoon
When love was dead and laughter,
That Jock went striding 'neath the moon,
And Margery pining after.

(*To spirit.*) Away ! I say, away !

Unid. Well acted, Fool, and well sung.

Dagonet. Yea, it is a part of me.

Unid. (*Aside*) He will do. (*To* DAGONET) Fool, wilt thou deliver a message for me?

Dagonet. Yea, by my love.

Unid. It be a pressing business, and a private one.

[*Speaks in a low voice.*

Thou seest this ring. It is the Queen's. Thou needs must find Sir Launcelot, and deliver it to him privately and say! "This night afore midnight."

Dagonet. What doth it mean?

Unid. It meaneth, do thy part, and shut thy ears and mouth, and put a padlock on thine inward thoughts. Wilt thou do it?

Dagonet. Yea that I will, 'tis for the Queen, (*to spirit*)
Away! away! Haunt me not!

Unid. What aileth thee?

Dagonet. Did I speak?

Unid. Thou spokest as to someone.

Dagonet. 'Tis but an infirmity.

Unid. 'Tis a queer one. Thou wilt be speedy and private?

Dagonet. That I will. Not one kiss?

Unid. Away! away! Haunt me not.

[*Exit.*

[*VIVIEN comes from the alcove.*

Vivien. Ha! thou false lover!

[*DAGONET drops the ring.*

Dagonet. 'Tis thou!

Vivien. Caught in the act, soft words and lovers songs,
And rings exchanged, and even kisses proffered.
Thou Double-Dealer! Thou wouldst seek my love?

Dagonet. I tell thee thou art wrong. 'Tis the appearances
are at fault.

Vivien. Thou liest! Didst thou not offer to buss her?

Dagonet. 'Twas but a sally to cover mine inward thoughts.

Vivien. Thou liest again. What were those low words she spake, when she took thy hand?

Dagonet. 'Twas but a message she gave me on a private matter.

Vivien. Oh! oh! very private! Dagonet, very private!

Dagonet. I cannot tell thee of its import.

Vivien. Nay, thou canst not, for thou liest.

Dagonet. I tell thee, Vivien, thou wilt madden me.
I tell thee, I love thee only, and thou knowest it.

Vivien. What was the substance of that message?

Dagonet. If thou must have it, and thou draggest my heart out, it was from the Queen. 'The words, "tonight afore midnight."

Vivien. A true story! To thee?

Dagonet. Nay, to Sir Launcelot.

Vivien. Thou liest! Canst thou explain that ring she gave thee? (*picks it up.*)

Dagonet. 'Tis the Queen's.

Vivien. Ho! ho! And thou the trusted messenger! 'Tis a likely story. Wouldst have me believe it?

Dagonet. Vivien, I tell thee that I love thee, and am in Hell for thee, aye, in Hell!

Vivien. Thou forgettest thine important message, thou most trusted lover and messenger.

Dagonet. Vivien, wilt thou not believe me?

Vivien. Go, go, I tell thee, I will see thee again.

[*Exit Dagonet.*

Vivien. Now cometh the hour when my revenge ap-
Now winds my web about doomed Camelot, [proacheth,
An angered fate hangs o'er these castle walls.
There will be bloody deeds abroad tonight.
Rise Spirits of old vengeance and affright!
Vivien conquereth. Wait! wait!

[*Curtain.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—(*Rise outer curtain.*) *Passage near the*
QUEEN'S apartments. Enter DAGONET.

Dagonet. 'Tis little I can do, but I will mend
The devilment that I have helped to cause.
Hark, now they come ! Here will I take my stand.
'Tis over my dead body when they come,
That they'll come at her. Ho ! stand without !

(*Sounds heard without. Enter MORDRED, SIR AGRAVAINE*
and other Knights with torches and naked swords. DAG-
ONET draws.)

Where go you, Masters ?

Mordred. We go this road, 'ware how you stop our way.

Dagonet. The man who goes this road goes o'er my
body.

Sir Ag. Louse ! take that ! (*Stabs DAGONET, he falls.*)

Mordred. 'Tis the King's jester.

Dagonet. You have leeches my folly. Now is the jest
Vivien ! (*dies*) [ended.

A Knight. He was a man after all.

Mordred. Onward Knights to better game than this,
Though little we know the tragedy that ended
When yon poor light went out ! Come this way !

[*Exit all.*

(*Rise inner curtain.*) *The QUEEN'S apartment, LAUNCELOT*
and GUINEVERE.

Laun. I come this night to bid you a long farewell,
Before I leave this kingdom's shores for ever.
This love doth hold me in a demon's grasp,
And my heart breaks to feel great Arthur's love,
And all the time we twain be meeting thus.

Guin. Nay, nay Launcelot, leave me not forlorn,
I cannot live without thee. Thy strong arms,

And thy warm kisses are to me the one
Fair garden springing on this drearsome earth.

Laun. Lady I must go. My lands in France,
Tribute to my sword, I'll make a kingdom.
And pass my days in memories of thee.

Guin. Nay, nay thou wilt not go, and if thou must,
My heart will bleed for thee until my death.

Unid. (hurrying in.) Madam, there is treason without.
Many armed knights do come this way.

Laun. Now is the end come I have long expected,
The grim fatality of all my fears,
The nightmare real at last. Quick ! my Sweet !
Kiss me your latest now. This is my death !

Guin. Launcelot, save, save thyself,
I will bar them with my body here.
They will but trample a dead, dishonored Queen,
Whom brute fatality made its passing sport.
Quick ! that way !

Laun. Nay, nay, sweet Love, but I will die with thee.
And show great love can make a greater death.

(Draws) Would to God I had mine armour.

*(Loud knocking heard at the door and the voice of MORDRED
[heard without.]*

Come out thou traitor Launcelot and show the world
The face of him who hath dishonored Arthur.
Come out thou Traitor.

Guin. Launcelot save thyself, there is time yet.

Laun. Nay, Love, I'll end me here, if be my fate.
Ho ! Cowards without ! I am a single man,
Devoid of armour having but my sword,
Yet will I open and give you Hell's glad welcome.

(Unbars the door, SIR AGRAVAINE rushes in)

Laun. Die Hound ! *(brains him,)* LAUNCELOT drags him
[aside and bars the door.]

Quick ! Help me to this armour ! *(takes the arms from
[SIR AGRAVAINE'S body, and arms himself.]*

Guin. (*Helping him*) Aye, Love, if prayers are aught, will mine clothe thee.

(*Voices outside,*) Open up! Traitor! open up!

Guin. Great God, Great God, help this poor Queen who prays! (*LAUNCELOT buckles his armour.*)

Laun. Now am I ready, fare thee well, sweet Love. Whatever haps, and we may meet no more, This side of darkness; carry to thy grave, That Launcelot loved thee, thee, and only thee.

Guin. Oh, Launcelot, my heart breaks. (*they embrace, the QUEEN faints.*) (*LAUNCELOT to the maids,*) Take her back from this, protect her, keep her safe.

This work is not for her sweet presence. Now heaven help The man that meeteth Launcelot's blade this night! (*Voices without,*) Coward! Traitor! wilt thou open up?

Laun. Yea, Traitors who foreswore the name of knight, When like some drunken rabble ye polluted The gentle sacredness of these apartments. And every man who shamed her ears tonight (*Throws open the doors*) shall die! die! die! Come on Devils! (*They rush in and then fall back in surprise.*)

Laun. Ha! ha! here's wine that Launcelot's blade would drink. Die, Devils! (*rushes forward hacking fiercely with his sword, twelve knights fall one after the other.*)

Mordred. God of Heaven, let us back! This man be mad! (*Retreats with four knights, LAUNCELOT slays the rest.*)

Laun. Come on, ye Fiends of Hell! I'll back me here, Launcelot is a man of honour!

SCENE II.—SIR LAUNCELOT'S apartment, midnight. *Enter several Knights with torches and swords.*

Sir Ban. Hello there! wake up!

Knights. Hello! Within! Within! (*Loud knocking heard at the doors. Enter several other knights. Enter SIR LAUNCELOT.*)

Laun. What means this that ye be armed ?

Sir. Ban. Strange horrors woke us frozen from our beds.
Hideous nightmares beset us. Some heard moanings,
some that grave-bells rang, and others saw strange
spectres, and I myself heard clash of mighty arms, and
quick each man found himself leaped from his bed,
naked blade in hand. What may it portend ? we be
much affrighted !

Laun. 'Tis a true portent. Now the end hath come
Of peace and happiness for this dooméd kingdom.
To-night on private meeting with the Queen,
In her apartments, there was I surrounded,
And hounded traitor, slew so many knights,
There's scarce one left to tell the King the story.

Knights. A most foul and dastard attack ! The kingdom
is doomed.

Enter a Messenger.

Laun. The Queen ! quick ! the Queen ! what of her ?

Mess. An order hath come in the King's name ;
She is to be burnt tomorrow noon.

Laun. Never ! by my blade, she shall not die !

Knights. She shall not ! she shall not ! on our lives !

SCENE III.—*The KING's lodge in the forest. ARTHUR
walking back and forth.*

Arthur. Would I had not done this ! Heaven this hour
Be kind to this poor king, suspend thy wrath.
For my past frailties judge me not too heavy.
Oh, were it dawning ! Nay if it be shame,
Night roll for ever round your shrouding glooms,
Hide Arthur's woe in your convenient black.
Rise not, O, pitiless Day with searching white,
Showing abroad catastrophe and doom.
Hark 'tis the messenger. Now my royal soul,

Is it black or white, is it death or life to thee?

(*Enter Messenger*) Sire!

Arthur. Speak! Is it calamity?

Mess. Yea, Sire, it is calamity, Sir Launcelot ta'en,—

Arthur. In the Queen's chamber?

Mess. Yea, Sire.

Arthur. Then sable Night shut out the morning now.
O, Blackness, bury Arthur in thy shroud!
O, Calamities pelt, pelt your fire!
Sink now, proud Arthur, sink to rise no more.

Enter MORDRED and two KNIGHTS.

Mordred. We bring you evil news in sorry haste.
Launcelot ta'en by us in the Queen's apartments,
When we, hailing him traitor, would bring him out,
Then he mad with a devil did issue forth,
And slay the most of us, so that we are scarce fled with our
As these two knights do witness. [lives,

Knights 'Tis true, King.

Arthur. Murder and Treason walk abroad this night.
Adultery and Incest leave their graves.

Arthur, Arthur thou art a king no more!

Mordred. We would arrest the Queen, did we know thy
will.

Arthur. O, Night! Night! Night!

Mordred. 'Tis not an hour for grief and memories, Sire,
But action, instant action, is the word,
If thou wouldst keep thy kingdom. Sir Launcelot knoweth
That thou wert privy to this heavy matter,
And swearing direst vengeance on us all,
Buildeth a party for to help the Queen,
And oust thee from thy royalty.

Arthur. Dost thou not know I loved this Launcelot.
And had I chosen a brother or a son,
It had been Launcelot! Oh thou cruel World!
Thou hast no cloud of evils brooding dire,

So much hath rained. Mordred take my crown,
To illegitimacy pass my glory now.

Mordred. Nay Sire ! but be a king until thou takest
A King's dread vengeance on thine enemies.

Arthur. Enemies thou sayest. Who so low,
To stoop to hate this cuckold, shaméd king.
I am a king no more, my 'Table Round
Is but a stall-yard where the swine of men
Will rend and snarl and tear my glory down.

Enter GWAINÉ.

Gwainé. This is a bad and foolish matter, King,
And thou wert fool to fetch it to an issue.
But now thou makest bad worse. Didst thou send out
For Launcelot's arrest and the Queen's murder ?

Mordred. The order hath gone out in the King's name.
'Tis gone too far for compromises now.

Gwainé. Tis thou hast done all this, thou Plotter !

Mordred. Thou liest ! Tis but the natural end of circum-
stance that worked its issue. I tell thee, the King
ordered this.

Gwainé. King, didst thou give these orders ?

Arthur. Gwainé thy words were ever over-blunt,
But now they're fitting. None need show me reverence.

Gwainé. Know I not reverence, but I would of facts.
Didst thou proclaim that Guinevere should die
Being found of treason foul against thy person,
And doom her to the stake tomorrow noon ?

Arthur. The Queen ! the queen ! thou sayest, I'll have
If there be a Queen tomorrow in this land, [no queens !
She shall die the death ! 'tis the King's word !

Mordred. Now thou hast thine answer.

Gwainé. Then fear Sir Launcelot's hate and split this
Toppie yonder King and bring him down, [kingdom,
As thou wouldst love to. Gwainé will none o' this.

The Pope shall hear it ! What's a woman worth !
That truth, or untruth, she should wreck a kingdom ?

Enter a Messenger in haste.

Mordred. Speak !

Mess. Sir Launcelot and many Knights have rescued the Queen and have taken her to Joyeous Guard, and in the quick struggle Sir Gareth, and Sir Lynnette were slain.

Arthur. More woes ! More woes ! Where will this end ?

Mordred. (*To SIR GWAINES*) Now art thou satisfied ?

Gwaine. (*To MESS.*) What ! Thou liest ! tell me my brothers be slain ?

Mess. 'Tis true, Master, mine own eyes saw them dead.

Gwaine. Hell ! who did the deed ?

Mess. Sir Launcelot himself. He rode quick i' the Court And lighted and hacked without looking at whom he met, to reach the Queen, whom bearing to horse, he stayed not to see who were dead or wounded but straight rode away.

Gwaine. This world or the next, he will answer me !
Hell ! mine own two brothers, and all for a damned wench !
Queen or no, King, thou shalt answer here.
Yea, all shall answer for this damnèd business.

Mordred. Yea, I will help thee. 'Twas most unnatural,
Who never harmed him, he should serve them so.

Gwaine. Launcelot, Launcelot, now I cast thee out,
One world won't hold us !

Mordred. This works my way. O World, thou art mould-
To my poor vengeance ! [ing swift
(*To Arthur.*) Sire what wilt thou do ?

Arthur. To arms, to arms, we'll siege him in his hold.
'Tis death that cures dishonor. He will reap
The swift dread harvest of Heaven's retribution.

Gwaine. Would Launcelot were but two men, I'd slay
'Twould suit my feelings.

[him twice.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE IV.—(*Rise outer curtain.*) *Court at Camelot.*

Enter two Gentlemen.

1st Gent. Were I the weaker kind, I'd trickle tears
For this poor kingdom. Hast thou seen the Pope's bull?

2nd Gent. Yea, forbidding the carrying on of this strange
And commanding Arthur to take back his Queen, [war,
And give Sir Launcelot passage from the Kingdom.
He be a wondrous Knight, this Launcelot.
'Tis pity this love o'ercame him.

Both pass out. Enter VIVIEN and MORDRED.

Vivien. My heart grows hot to bring things to an issue.

Mordred. Patience! and thou wilt see the issue come.
Launcelot banished, Arthur follows after,
With blustering Gwaine, both ravening for war.
Arthur will leave me regent, then's mine hour.

(*Both pass on.*) (*Rise inner curtain.*) (*Enter ARTHUR, takes his state. Knights and Ladies. Trumpets blow without. Enter LAUNCELOT with the QUEEN draped in black, with her Ladies. LAUNCELOT leads the QUEEN, who stands. LAUNCELOT kneels. ARTHUR averts his face. LAUNCELOT speaks.*)

Laun. Sire! by order of the Pope of Rome
And your most royal promise, here I bring
Unto your keeping Guinevere the Queen,
And dares one knight within these royal precincts
Impugn her chastity or queenliness,
I meet him with my body.

Arthur. Madam, I acknowledge you as Queen.
It is the will of Heaven. I submit.
But loving wife thou art no more to me.

Not Pope nor Prince can white thy black in this.
(GUINEVERE *takes her state.*

Guin. Arthur of Britain, I answer thee, the King,
I am no more thy wife nor ever was,
Nor am I shamed as Queen to own the love
I've borne for Launcelot. In the coming world
He will be mine, as I am truly his.
I wronged thee not great Arthur, but 'twas thou
And hellish circumstance have wrecked my days.
'Tis the Queen's answer, she will speak no more.

Arthur. Sir Launcelot Du Lake, arise ! (LAUNCELOT
Launcelot Du Lake, thou traitor knight, [stands.
Sinner against the honor of this realm,
I banish thee for ever from this kingdom,
On pain of foulest death, dost thou return.

Laun. Sire, I accept the issue.

Mordred. 'Tis but a gentle majesty that leans
To mercy such as this, were I thy king —

Gwaine. Yea, get thee quick. Fast as thou nearest France
We sail the faster. Thou shalt meet with Gwaine,
And pay his brother's spirits thou hast slain,
Thou foul lewd traitor !

Laun. Lord Arthur, thou hast reason to scorn me now,
And all thine anger stabs mine inward soul ;
But now tis open I must tell thee true,
I love Queen Guinevere as mine own body,
And her alone will love unto my death,
As to none other. For this woeful love,
I'll answer to my God who put it there,
And not to man, nor even to thee, proud King.
And yet I say it, yea with breaking heart,
I love thee, King, as doth no other man,
And did no hideous fate come in between
I had been thy Launcelot still.

Arthur. (*Aside*) Great God ! Now my heart breaketh.
(*To LAUNCELOT*) Begone, false Knight. 'Tis enough.

Laun. Yea yet a little, Sire, it is the end.
If Gwaine would hearken I would answer him
For his two brothers.

Gwaine. Nay, nay I'll not hearken.

Laun. Tis ended then, but I would say to thee,
That nothing next to this most heavy matter,
The most dread, sorrowful matter in' this poor world,
Hath grieved me so as that I did that deed.
All blinded with my sorrow for the Queen,
I knew not 'twas your brothers that I slew.

Gwaine. Nay, nay, blood, blood alone will answer.

Laun. (*To the QUEEN*)

And thou sad Guinevere, thou Queen of women,
Sweetest of soul and form upon this earth,
I'll look upon thy beauteous face no more.
Let womanhood blossom the days to come,
There never-more will be one like to thee.

(*Bends and kisses her hand*) (*GUINEVERE goes toward him*)

Guin. Launcelot, take me with thee, I am thine.

Arthur. And thou the Queen?

Guin. I am no Queen of realm save this man's heart.
And where he treads, that land to me alone
Beloved of the kingdoms of this earth.
Oh! take me Launcelot, my Lord! my King!

Arthur. Ladies, the Queen to her apartments!

Laun. I would not shame thy kindness, Guinevere.
We were each others ere this world began,
And we together, unshamed yet will go
To meet our God, sweet Love farewell, farewell.

(*Hurries out. The QUEEN borne slowly to her apartments*
[weeping.]

Arthur. Oh, black brute Evil, why was Arthur born?
Now is all loveliness gone out from life.
Yea, I will sink. Nay, I am Arthur still.
The Kingly still, defying Hell and Fate.
To arms! to arms! Red battle is my mood.

Mordred. Yea, battle !

Gwaine. Yea, blood, for blood ! my brother's spirits call.

Arthur. My heart awakens ! Mordred, as my regent,
I leave thee fillial keeper of my crown,
My queen and kingdom, while I wed with war,
And bring as issue, yon foul Launcelot's doom.
Make my forces ready. France ! is the word.

All. (*draw swords and shout*) Yea, battle ! [Curtain.

SCENE V.—*A Corridor in the Palace. Enter two Gentlemen.*

1st Gent. Hast heard the news ? Mordred's usurped the kingdom, hath seized the Queen, and backed by half the realm doth challenge Arthur to a warm homecoming. Tis said he hath plotted this long time and now hath proved his chances. How stand you in this most bitter struggle ?

2nd Gent. I'm for Arthur and now for Dover and France this coming night.

1st Gent. Then I am with you. May we bring these shores New peace from this usurper when we come [exit both.

Enter VIVIEN with a dagger.

Vivien. Nay he shall never make her Queen. Nay never ! She shall die first ! No Queen but Vivien Shall royal it while Mordred lifts the crown. His slave, his creature, yea, in all save this. I'll make her beauty wan, I'll curtain her lights. Yea she shall Queen in Tartarus this night.
(*sounds heard without, VIVIEN gets behind the tapestry.*)

Enter MORDRED as KING.

Mordred. Now have I reached the pinnacle of my revenge In these uncertain heights of Arthur's glory. And even now I sicken of the struggle. Even now I top a tower of fear.

A thousand swords, would leap at my command,
And swim this land in blood at my one word,
Would at a stronger power but turn and rend me.
The thousand throats that this morn shouted, "Mordred!"
Tomorrow morn may shout as loud for Arthur.
'Tis but a petty thing to be a King,
And strut an hour to crown a people's will
And make them think they wield a majesty,
And hold a phantom rule; then pass and be
A little dust in a forgotten heap.
Nay, 'tis not worth the blacking of a soul,
The letting of a single human life,
The fouling o'er of youthful memory.
And I am now this self-contemnéd thing,
A man of truest sorrows who descended
From out the pedestal of nobler dreams,
And used the subtle intrigues of this world
To climb this pyramid of human weakness.
And now I hate it as I hate myself
Who stooped to gain it. Yet must Mordred king
This realm with a tyranny that fear
Wields o'er a monarchy that knows not love.
And burn his heart out for a woman's scorn.
Yea she shall be my Queen if love can win her.

Enter GUINEVERE as a State Prisoner

Mordred. Madam, I would detain you.

Guin. Usurper King! what means this bringing of me
I deemed the shelter of a sisterhood [here?
Were not denied me.

Mordred. Madam, I would to you unfold this matter.
I am not all you think me in your scorn
Though I be born mis-shapen, yet my soul
Hath appetite for beauty like a man's
That shows the inward in the outward mein.
Madam, I would lay the matter plainly,
I have long been a victim to thy beauties,
And would new-make thee Queen of this old Kingdom.

Guin. Never! Were Launcelot or Arthur standing by,
Insulter of thy Queen, thou wouldst die.
Make way! Make way!

Mordred. Madam, have compassion on my weakness!
A soul is lodged within this crooked body.
No man hath ever loved as Mordred loves.

Guin. Make way! this be hideous.

Mordred. Lady, let your own sorrow plead for Mordred's
As thou hast loved Launcelot unhappy, [sorrow.
So he loves thee.

Guin. Show thy love by closing this audience quickly.
I am all Launcelot's in this world and the next,
As Heaven knoweth.

Mordred. Then thou wilt not have compassion.

Guin. I pity thee, but this may never be.

Mordred. Never?

Guin. As I am a Queen, never!

Mordred. Lady thy pity doth but little help me.
Yet will I show thee Mordred hath a heart.
Know then thou hast killed the spark of Mordred's hope,
And silenced the music of this world for him,
Yet lady as rightful king of this great land
He grants thee safest passage where thou wilt.

Guin. I would go to a Nunnery.

Mordred. As thou wilt. Not one word? Not one token?

Guin. Prince, thou hast my respect and gratitude
For this thine act.

[*Exit GUINEVERE and her train.*

VIVIEN comes forward.

Vivien. Ha! Ha! Ha! King Mordred!

Mordred. (*Springs forward and draws.*) Fiend! thou
diest! (*He clutches her, they stand confronting each
other.*) Nay, nay and thou didst hear all? Nay, I
will not kill thee. Thy punishment hath been more

than I could mete thee. I see sharp agony in thine evil face. Yea, Woman thou hast suffered.

Vivien. Oh God ! My love ! My love ! (*would stab herself.*)

Mordred. Nay, die not ! (*throws the dagger away*) Thou deservest thy reward. Mordred will crown this farce and make thee Queen.

Vivien. Me ! thy wife ?

Mordred. Nay, nay, nor mistress even, only Queen.
[*Curtain.*]

SCENE VI.—France—A Tent on the Field near LAUNCELOT'S Castle. ARTHUR paces to and fro.

Arthur. I would I were on British soil again
This leaguer goes but feebly. I am sick
Of losing battles to this Launcelot,
Whose strength and prowess in far kinder days,
Was my heart's pride. Arthur thy star grows dark.
Thou canst not keep the love of woman. Nay,
Men's friendships turn to traitor on the lips.
Oh, Merlin ; couldst thou now but see thine Arthur.

Enter Messenger.

Arthur. Well !

Mess. Sir Launcelot met Sir Gwaine beneath the wall.
And of all the bloody fights betwixt them two,
Which have horrified this ensanguined war,
This was the bloodiest.

Arthur. Speak on !

Mess. Sir Gwaine be mortal wounded, so it seemeth.

Arthur. Nay !

Mess. He even fought on after he was down,
Till his blade fell from out his palsied hand.

Arthur. This time maketh thrice that he hath been
And surely this will cool his fiery blood. [defeated,
He is the strongest hater I have known
In all my royalty. He would as lief go
To Hell, so that his foe might forfeit Heaven.

Enter GWAINE, borne by Squires and Attendants.

Gwaine. Let me forth—forth, I say! Hell! catiffs, I
I would at him. Oh! [be better now.

Attendants. Sire, if he rest not he will die.
The blood runneth from him in streams
So we cannot quench it, do he not lie still.

Gwaine. King, I be a shamed man. Damn this world!
I will shut it out o' my knowledge. I be in pieces.

Arthur. Thou hast had enough, temper thy hates.
And do thy brothers more they lodge in Hell.
I am for England.

Gwaine. Nay, King, let me but once more.

Arthur. Thou canst scarce utter, thou wilt die.

Gwaine. Nay, I will stand his front so long as I may hold
a blade, and shake it at him.!

Enter a Messenger in great haste.

Arthur. Whence come you?

Mess. From England. Mordred hath made him King.

Arthur. Nay! nay!

Mess. Tis true, and seized the Queen.

Arthur. Great Heaven!

Mess. Even now he sitteth robed in thy late state,
And wieldeth puissance.

Gwaine. The damned hunchback!

Arthur. Oh World, would I were gone! My Queen untrue,
My heart's best brother traitor, even my son,
Mine ill-got son doth rend me. Who would now
Hold fate with sunken Arthur?

(*To the Messenger.*) Be there more?

Mess. Nay, Sire, I came in haste at the first news,
Though it is said that he would wed the Queen?

Arthur. A thousand devils take him! —Nay, not that
Not that most foul completion!

Ho! Sir Hake, Sir Mark. Ho Knights without!

Enter Knights.

Arthur. Mordred's usurped the kingdom. We must haste
to England now. The siege is raised. Yea I will blot
him out or make an end righting mine old glory.

Gwaine. (Borne out.) Now are my chances gone.
Gwaine is disgraced. This is a world of woe. I'll
fight no more. But one more bout, and my sword
might ha' done it.

[*Curtain.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—(*Rise outer Curtain.*) *Enter two Soldiers.*

1st Sol. Ho, without there!

2nd Sol. What news?

1st Sol. Arthur is back for England with all his forces,
and the King hath sent an army to withstand his land-
ing, and himself leaveth to night to follow them.

2nd Sol. He be a rare King this Hunchback. He hath
a marvellous power. His Knights be feared of him,
but 'tis said he's just.

1st Sol. He be not lawful got, 'tis said, but none can say
his rule be foul.

2nd Sol. 'Tis said that the new Queen be a witch an' hath
holpen him wi' her deviltries.

1st Sol. God save us if it be true! Yet it is safe to say;
God save the King an' Queen. 'Tis better to cry a
witch Queen than to be split 'i the gullet.

2nd Sol. Yea wi' plenty ale 'i the pewter and meat 'o the spit, no matter who queens or kings it, so says I. I'm for Mordred an' the Witch.

1st Sol. So be I till the next change comes. [*Exit both.*

(*Rise inner Curtain.*) *Enter VIVIEN as QUEEN with many Ladies and Pages—takes her state.*

Enter a Knight, who kneels.

Vivien. What news from France, Sir Bors?

Knight. Arthur cometh back, my Lady.

Vivien. Nay!

Knight. Yea, my Lady, the army be embarked.

Vivien. Oh short and bitter!

Enter MORDRED.

Mordred. Well, Madam!

Vivien. (*To the Ladies*) Begone! [*Exit all.*

(*To MORDRED.*) Hast thou heard the news?

Mordred. 'Tis as I have long expected. He now cometh
[back.

Vivien. Art thou prepared?

Mordred. Yea, if 'tis death thou meanest.
And 'twere better so. Thou art a Queen already!
I had not thought thou wouldst so look the Queen.

Vivien. Mordred, would that thou mightst also see
I wear a heart, a woman's heart, beneath
This queenly mask.

Mordred. A heart?

Vivien. That beats and breaks for thee.

Mordred. I'm not myself, I am a hunchback king,
Who stole his father's rule by subtlety.
And keepeth it by power of being a devil.
I know not love. Woman, thou art mad!
Art thou not satisfied with what thou art?

I made thee all that woman's heart might crave.
Revenge, ambition, these all can I grant,
But love, a commodity not in Mordred's giving.
Use this thy power to surfeit while it lasts,
To-morrow it will topple. I'm o'er-weary
Of all this sycophancy of creeping men,
Who fear my power and sneer upon my back ;
A pageantry of lies where human worms,
Who crawl to-day, to-morrow get a sting
And use it on the hand that 'founded them.
I cannot mould the face to popular form,
And hide the thought behind the outward act.
And make good ill, ill good by royal patent.
Nay, I can scorn, and I can hate,—yea strike,
When rules the mood, yea, I'm a very devil ;
But cheat myself and others to what I am,
And be a popular dream, a fancied god,
The victim of a world's delusiveness,
What manner I am, I were not made for this.
Yea coming struggle I meet thee with a joy
'Twere scarce expected. Madam, I bid farewell.
We worked this masque together, thou and I,
And if it like thee little, blame not Mordred.
I go to-night to meet my Sire in battle.
Such fight will be this kingdom hath not known
In all its sorrows. Britain's darkest hours
Are blacking on her, I feel I go to death.
I leave some knights to guard thee. If thou desirest
Thou canst withdraw unto some convent close,
Till this blows over.

Vivien. Nay, Vivien flees not. She dies first ! Woman or
She will be found where dangers threaten thee [Queen
And menace thy kingliness, Oh Mordred,
Thou knowest not the woman that I am.
Take me with thee as thy heart's true slave,
Where thou diest, there would Vivien die,
Or where thou goest, there would she wander too.

Mordred. Nay, nay, 'tis vain, I am a man apart.

Thou knowest not the iron I am become.
Mordred needs no shield of kindly help
Other than what unkind nature gave him.
Woman, thou dost unqueen thyself, I tell thee.
Thou wastest thy words on Mordred.

Vivien. Oh brute, Oh cruel shape, not natural man,
Hast thou no feeling ?

Mordred. I go forth to-night.
To wreck my father, stem his tide this way
Unto his rightful kingdom. Speak me love !
Rather tell the lamb skipping the mead,
Go ask the wolf for suckle.

Vivien. Nay Mordred, slay me now and thou wilt know
Vivien had blood full warm to flow for thee.

Mordred. Woman, I'm all iron and adamant
And yet I pity thee for thou hast hell.
I would not slay thee—rather fare thee well.

[*Exit MORDRED.*]

Vivien. Oh God ! Mordred ! Mordred ! Is this all ?
And I have moulded him unto this iron
I beat against. It is my punishment !
Oh God ! Oh God ! Nay, I will go with him,
And die with him if need be. Now my wits !
But how ? How ? How ?

Enter a Page.

Page. Madam, the King ?

Vivien. He hath just left—Stay, dost thou go with him ?

Page. Yea, Madam.

Vivien. Doth see this jewel ?

Page. Yea Madam, it be wondrous indeed.

Vivien. It will be thine—wilt thou stay,
And let another go in thy stead.

Page. The King trusteth me.

Vivien. 'Tis the will of one who loveth the King far

more than ever thou couldst. 'Tis my will. Thou must stay. Quick, this way. *[Exit both.]*

Re-enter MORDRED with his Knights.

Trumpets without.

Mordred. Make haste ! Make haste ! Where tarrieth this Squire of mine ? We must ride to Dover ere it darkens.

A Knight. He cometh now, Sire.

Enter VIVIEN, disguised as a Squire.

Mordred. Dost thou keep thy king ? thou wert long in coming.

Vivien. I came with all speed, Sire.

Mordred. Thou seemest over pink and white for this work Canst thou fight ?

Vivien. Yea, Sire, I can use a dagger.

Mordred. Then follow—Ho, there without ! Now for Mordred's doom. *[Curtain*

SCENE II.—*The Kentish Coast. Landing of ARTHUR'S troops opposed by MORDRED. Battle going on in the distance. Enter GWAINÉ borne ashore on a litter. Battle comes near.*

A Soldier. They come this way, here will we stand and guard thee. *(They put down the litter.)*

Gwaine. How goes the fight ?

A Squire. Desperate hard. The enemy be strong, As if half England would shove the other 'i the sea.

Gwaine. Give me my sword, and help me up, I'll fight.

A Leech. Sir Knight, if you rise up it is your death.

Gwaine. Damn thee. to lie here helpless is to die, With those fierce sounds of battle in mine ears. Quick ! my sword ! mine old strength cometh back.

(*A Squire hands him his sword, he leaps to his feet. The battle comes near and they are all borne out fighting. Re-enter GWAINÉ borne by Soldiers and the Leech.*)

Leech. I told thee thou wouldst die.

Gwainé. And so wilt thou some day, and like a milksop,
[*i thy bed.*]

'Twas a poor prophesy though a sure one. It is naught.
Turn me over. Yea, I wedged some skulls, and clipped
Damned Mordred's wings o' some pen-feathers.

Enter ARTHUR.

Arthur. So far the battle's ours, this edge at least
Of Britain's soil doth Arthur own to-night.
What be this?

Gwainé. 'Tis Gwainé, King, brought to bay at last.

Arthur. Thou wert mad to fight.

Gwainé. 'Twas madness not to fight with all that battle
Ringing its clarion thunders in mine ears.
All life be madness and death but the healing of it.
I have reft some brain-pans, i' my time, ha! ha!
Tell traitor Launcelot.—Yea turn me softly,
'Twas a deft hand did give me that last stroke.

Leech. What be thy message knight, thy time groweth
short?

Gwainé. Yea, take away,—tell Launcelot, Gwainé's
vengeance waits him 'i the nether black. (*Dies.*)

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE III.—*Night on the battle field. The royal tent,
ARTHUR'S Camp.*

Arthur. Ho! there without. (*Enter a Page.*) Send me
Sir Bedivere. [*Exit Page.*]

Enter SIR BEDIVERE.

Arthur. Is all safe 'i the camp?

Sir. B. Yea, Sire, the sentries are set and watch fires ablaze. And all ready for battle i' the first dawn.

Arthur. What of the enemy?

Sir B. They be the same, Sire, all seemeth quiet 'i the camp.

Arthur. Remember all watchfulness, so there be no surprise. Thou canst go Bedivere, I would fain sleep.

Sir B. Yea, I go, Sire, and God keep thee this night.

Arthur. Stay, Knight, Arthur of England is a lonely man, Betrayed of those who should have loved him best.

To-night perchance he fronts the brink of death,

In bloody battle for his rightful kingdom.

Take this ring, Knight, in memory of thy King,

(Gives him a ring.) Survive he not the morrow.

Sir B. God keep thee, Sire!

[Exit SIR BEDIVERE.]

Arthur. Now what will morrow's dawn-rise bring to
Will it bring bloody victory or defeat? *[Arthur?]*

How like an autumn wood is stript my glory,

Who short since was sole monarch of this realm.

Oh! evil Spite, that ruleth this sad world!

Come joy, come hope, there's nothing sure but death.

Yea, I will sleep and muffle out my sorrows

A little while. *(Goes to the couch.)*

Nay, Arthur will not pillow till he beds with death,

Or doth regain his kingdom. I will rest here.

(Seats himself on a chair and wraps his cloak about him.)

Now for Oblivion's peace!

O stricken King, thou art the loneliest to-night.

In any realm. *(Leans forward falls asleep. A Page steals in.)*

Page. He sleeps. *(Exit Page.)* *(ARTHUR starts and mutters "Launcelot! Launcelot! My friend! My friend! Guinevere! Ah! Guinevere!")*

Ghost of Merlin rises.

Ghost. Arthur of England!

Arthur. (*In his sleep.*) Merlin ! Ah ! Merlin !

Ghost. I come to tell thy doom. To-morrow ! Arthur, to-morrow !

Arthur. Away Spirit ! Afright me not. Away ! Away !
(*Ghost vanishes, ARTHUR starts up.*)

Ah, Merlin ! did I dream of Merlin ? 'Twas but the fancy.

Oh, great Mage, to-night thy portents wander back

Unto my mind, Oh couldst thou see thine Arthur.

To-morrow, said the voice within my dream.

To-morrow ! Yea, to-morrow !

(*Sits down again and folds his cloak. Sleeps. Mutters*

" Mordred ! my son Mordred !

Ghost of GWAINÉ rises.

Ghost. King !

Arthur. Ah ! 'Tis thou ! Away ! away !

Ghost. King, fight not tomorrow.

Arthur. (*In his sleep.*) Nay, I will !

Ghost. King, fight not to-morrow.

Ghost vanishes, ARTHUR wakes.

Arthur. Yea, sleep is but the border land o' death.

'Tis twice ! 'Tis twice ! It is a certain portent.

Yea, Arthur fights, though Arthur dies, to-morrow.

Yea, now I'll sleep, for I am over-weary.

Weary of life, yea I am over-tired.

I would fain sleep though night should have no morning.

This night is sweet and restful. To-morrow comes doom,

This hour for soft oblivion.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE IV.—*Near the battlefield. Enter two Knights.*

1st Knight. This day is Britain doomed and Arthur's
Rent and dismembered by old grisled war. [Court.

2nd Knight. Meseems the kingdom's severed like two
That meet together in some mountain course [tides

To whelm other. Arthur's star grows dark,
And Mordred's darker. 'Tis the Queen they say,
Hath cursed the realm with her godless loves.

Enter two other Knights, fighting on foot.

1st Knight. A Mordred ! Ho ! A Mordred !

2nd Knight. An Arthur ! An Arthur ! Have at you ! (*They close and each stabs the other. Both die.*)

1st Knight. Thus is the kingdom rent like doomsday's
Such awful portents have been told abroad, [crack.
Since yesternight. Some say the world hath end.

2nd Knight. And what be they ?

1st Knight. The crucifixes on the churches' walls
Have trickled blood, and many abbey bells
Have tolled the midnight, rung by no man's hand.
Yea, even the dead have risen from their graves.

2nd Knight. Ora pro nobis !

1st Knight. Some even say that Merlin hath come back
And prophesied the kingdom at an end,
And all last night men dreamed such fearsome dreams
Of blight and pestilence and spectres dire ;
I fear me much the end of days hath come.

2nd Knight. How goes the fight ?

1st Knight. Yea even fiercer, as two tidal waves,
That roar together on some night bore,
And meet in thunders. Never hath such war
Been known in Britain since the ancient days.
The bowman's arrows darken all the sun.
The battle-axes clamor on the shields,
As on some morn the loud woodcutter's din
By some bright hillside. Knight encounters knight
In serried thunders. All the kingdom's turned
To one mad tournament of blood and flame.

(*The battle is heard moving nearer. Both rush out. Another part of the field. Enter ARTHUR surrounded by knights.*)

Arthur. Now where is he, that monster, foul, deformed,

In shape and spirit, Nature calls my son ?

Enter MORDRED.

Mordred. Here !

Arthur. Ah, Blot on all this sunlight, Creature dire,
Spawn of mine incest. There standest thou my sin,
Incarnate now before me, mine old doom,
Thou that wast stronger in thine influences
To work dread evil in this hideous world,
Than all the glory, all my good might win.

Mordred. Father !

Arthur. Yea, well say Father ! Parent I this ill
That hath enrent my kingdom all in twain.
In that dread night of my licentious youth,
When I in darkness thy foul shape begot,
I worked a web of blackness round my fate,
And thine, distorted phantom of my sin,
Not all the tolling of sweet abbey-bells
And murmur of masses sung these thousand years,
Can sweep from this doomed kingdom. Father, yea,
There is no truce betwixt us. Thou art Death
To all that I hold dearest on this earth.
Thou stood'st betwixt me and my gladder fate,
The one black spot on all my glory's sun.
In thee once more mine evil blackens in,
Reddens mine eyesight. Have at thee, foul Curse !

Mordred. Father !

Arthur. Have at you ! *They fight.* (ARTHUR wounds
MORDRED. *He falls.* A Knight stabs ARTHUR from
behind.)

Arthur. Ho ! all the sunlight blackens ! Mordred ! Oh !
My glory darkens ! Curtain not yon sun ! (Dies.)

Mordred. Yea, this is all and I were made for this,
To scatter death and desolation round
On this fair kingdom, ruin this sweet land,
And level all the pride of Arthur's glory,
As men might level some great castle walls,

And sow with salt the fields of his desire,
And make him mock before the eyes of men.
Turn all his great joy into bitterness.
Yea, I his blood, and I were made for this.
Oh ancient, cruel Laws of human life,
Oh deep, mysterious, unfathomable Source
Of man's poor being, we are ringed about
With such hard rinds of hellish circumstance,
That we can never walk or breathe or hope,
Or eye the sun, or ponder on the green
Of tented plain, or glorious blue of Heaven,
Or know love's joy, or knotted thews of strength,
But imps of evil thoughts creep in between,
Like lizards in the chinks of some fair wall,
And mar life's splendor and its fairness all.
'Tis some damned birth-doom blended in the blood
That prophecies our end in our poor acts.
Oh! we are but blind children of the dark
Wending a way we neither make nor ken.
Yea, Arthur, I had loved thee sweet and well,
And made mine arm a bulwark to thy realm,
Had I been but as fair as Launcelot.
What evil germ, false quickening of the blood,
Did breed me foul, distorted as I am,
That I should mar this earth and thy great realm
With my wry, knotted sorrows? Launcelot's love
Was manly, kind, and generous as became
A soul encased in such propitious frame.
The kingly trees well turn them to the sun,
And glory in their splendor with the morn.
'Tis natural that noble souls should dwell
'Twixt noble features, but the maiméd soul
Should ever be found in the distorted shape.
But I had loved as never man hath loved
Did nature only plant me sweet at first.
(*To his Knights.*) And now I die, and blessed be my death,
More blessed far that I had never breathed.
Murder and Treason were my midwives dire,
Rapine and Carnage, priests that shrive me now.

Enter VIVIEN, disguised as a Squire.

Vivien. Mordred ! thou diest !

Mordred. Who art thou ?

Vivien. I am Vivien.

Mordred. Hence, hence Viper, incarnate Fiend.
Not natural, woman, but Ambition framed,
And all lust's envy. Thou wert unto me
A blacker blackness. Did an angel come,
And whisper sweeter counsel in mine ears.
And trumpet hopes that all were not in vain,
But thou wouldst wool mine ears with malice dire,
And play upon the black chords of my heart.
Hence, Devil ! Mar not these my closing hours.

Vivien. O, Woe ! Woe ! (*Steals out.*)

Mordred (To the Knights.) Now bear me slowly to great
And let me place my hands upon his breast, [Arthur's side
For he was mine own father ! Alas ! Alas !
So hideous is this nature we endure.

(*The Soldiers place him by ARTHUR.*)

How calm he sleeps, Allencthon, as those should
Who die in glorious battle. Dost thou know
Oh ! mighty father that thine ill-got son,
Ill-got of nature and mysterious night,
To mar thy splendor and enwreck this world.
Now crawls to thy dead body near his death,
As would some wounded dog of faithful days,
To lick his master's hand ? Blame not, O King,
If thou somewhere may know what I here feel,
Thy poor, misshapen Mordred. Blame him not
The turbulent, treacherous currents of his blood
Which were a part of thine, nor let one thought
Of his past evil mar thy mighty rest ;
I would have loved thee, but remember that.
Now, past is all this splendour, new worlds come,

But nevermore will Britain know such grace,
Such lofty glory and such splendid days.
Back of the clang of battle, back of all
The mists of life, the clamour and the fall
Of ruined kingdoms built on human days,
Arthur! Merlin! Mighty dead, I come!
(*Springs to his feet.*)

Ho! Horse! To horse! My sword! A trumpet calls!
A Mordred! (*Dies.*)

[*Curtain.*]

THE END.





HILDEBRAND.

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

FOUNDED ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

THE GREAT POPE GREGORY VII,

HIS STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY WITH HENRY IV OF GERMANY,

AND HIS ENFORCEMENT OF THE CELIBACY OF THE CLERGY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HILDEBRAND, *Pope Gregory VII.*

HENRY IV, *of Germany.*

PETER, *Damiani, a monk (friend to HILDEBRAND).*

GERBHERT, *a married priest of Milan.*

ARIALD, *a decretal preacher (lover of Margaret).*

ARNULPH, *a decretal preacher.*

BRUNELLI, *a cardinal.*

Bishop of Bamberg.

WOLF, *Lord of Bamberg, a German Noble.*

Two Burghers.

BRUN, } *two monks.*
WAST, }

An Abbot.

A Warder.

Queen of Germany.

MARGARET, *wife of Gerbherth and daughter of Hildebrand.*

CATHERINE, *mother of Margaret and former wife of Hildebrand.*

Cardinals, Lords, Bishops, Soldiers, Monks, Burghers and
Pages.

HILDEBRAND.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—(*Rise outer Curtain.*) *An Inn-yard in Milan.*
Two Burghers discovered seated at a table, drinking.

1st B. Well, well, these be the strange days indeed, indeed !

2nd B. (Rather drunk.) How now, neighbor Burnard, how now ?

1st B. Heardst thou not the news, good Neighbor ? But with thy nose always i' the wine-pot, thou canst not know anything aside its rim.

2nd B. Wine-pot, wine-pot, thou sayst ha ! ha ! nose i' the wine-pot thou sayest, 'tis better than sticking it into every business save thine own, hey ! neighbor Burnard ! But what be this news that would keep the nose out o' the wine-pot ?

1st B. There be a new Pope at Rome, the Monk, Hildebrand. How like you that ?

2nd B. God, keep us all ! Now thou dost say it ! It seemeth they be making new Popes every Michaelmas. This were no reason for to keep the nose outside the wine-pot. Here's to his health, God save him !

'Twere a merry grape was squeezed for this, good Neighbor. Here's long life to thee an' the Holy Pope, and especially to the royal Henry. Soon may he come to Italy.

1st B. It be said, Henry cannot sleep o' nights i' his bed, for the making of this same Pope, Hildebrand, or Hellbrand, as some folks call him. But hast thou heard the greater news ?

2nd B. Nay, what now? Nothing be new now. Nothing be new, along o' fighting and preaching and lechering and damning in the Church and State. Nothing be new save drinking, and that be ever new. Ha! ha! What else be new?

1st B. 'Tis concerning this same scarce-baked Pope, this Hellbrand. 'Tis said he hath sworn by the mass and all the saints never to rest until he hath unwived all the priests i' Europe. How like you that, good neighbor Burnard?

2nd B. Ho! ho! 'Tis a good joke. Unwive the priests! 'Tis a good joke. 'Twere well for me and thee did he swear a vow to unwive all the burghers i' Milan. 'Twould gie one I know more peace i' his bed o' nights. 'Tis the priests ever have all the good fortune i' Europe. Ah me, ah me! 'Tis ever so.

1st B. Yea, but there's more news yet, good Neighbor, this same Hellbrand, which be a good name for him if he be Pope, hath sent out two wondrous preachers, endowed with uncommon powers of tongue and orders, to spread this same doctrine in all Italy and throughout Europe; an' it be said they took fearsome oaths, on pain of eternal damnation, not to rest till they had done so; an' further, 'tis said, they be here to-night to preach i' the market.

2nd B. I' Milan?

1st B. (*Rising.*) Yea i' Milan, here, i' the square.

2nd B. Well now! It do be passing strange, well now! It be a damn law, and he be a damn liar, who saith not. A most unnatural law, for our good pastor. Were it my case now, it were fitting, (*1st goes out*) who taketh a lecture every midnight near upon cock-crow, such as no Pope's Bull could outwit in language an' rhetoric. Say good Neighbor, what thinkest thou? Might I not be made a priest? What be qualifications? (Ha! he hath gone!) I could drink with an abbot, yea, an archbishop, yea, I'll see this same Hellbrand

about the matter: it shall be done, be done, ha! ha! it shall be done. (*Reels out.*)

(*Rise inner Curtain, the market place.*) *Enter several jolly Monks.*

1st. (Sings) Ours be a jolly life,
No care nor ill have we,
We neither toil nor starve nor beg,
But live right merrily.

All. No wife to scold, no child to squall,
An' put us on the rack;
We drink good wine, we kiss the maids,
An' the Pope is at our back.

2nd. So here's unto the jolly monk, (*all grasp hands*),
And here's to him, alack, (*all clench fists*)
Who'd turn him from his board and bunk,
For the Pope is at his back.

All. The Pope is at our back, good Freres,
The Pope is at our back;
We fleece the churls, we scorn the King,
For the Pope is at our back. (*All pass on.*)

Enter a great crowd of Burghers, men and women, who fill the market. Enter ARNULPH and ARIALD, the decretal preachers. ARNULPH ascends a pulpit to harangue the crowd.)

Arnulph. Know ye Citizens and Burghers of Milan, that whereas in the past, by reason of evils and curses, through the power of the Devil, Holy Church hath fallen into abomination, to the shame of men and sorrow of Heaven, it hath here now and at this time, behooved her to cast off certain of those abominations, to wit, especially that most heinous sin, whereby the priests of the altar, do, without grace and carnally given, co-habit in concubinage with those weaker vessels, even as do the common and unsanctified of humanity; wherefore know ye Citizens and Burghers of this city of Milan, that the Holy Father doth now and at this time, by me and through me, instruct you each and collectively, of

the dreadful enormity of this most damnable sin, whereby the holy priesthood is made of none effect, and Holy Church doth languish in weakness and vassalage to the princes and lords of this carnal world,—know ye,—

A Burgher. Most reverend Doctor, cut ye short the “know ye’s” an’ the “wherefores” and th’ “verbiations” an’ the “latinities” an’ come down from your high flown rostrum an’ tell us the church’s will. We be plain men.

Other Burghers. Well done, Big Gellert. Thou art in the right of it. Bravo! Gellert.

Ariald. Insolent Lump! would’st thou interrupt a doctor of Holy Church?

Gellert. Holy Church confound him and thee, too, thou sour-faced varlet! Who’s a talking of Holy Church? He is but a stray rooster from some mad convent, an’ thou his mate ranting on a mad doctrine. Holy Church teacheth no such damned doctrine. Be we fools?

Burghers. Well hit, Big Gellert, thou canst give him the latinities of it. Hit him back, old Pigeon!

Arnulph. Beware, thou impious Mountain of mortality, an’ ye foolish burghers lest ye insult in me a power that is behind me.

A Clerk. Come, come, get thee down, we want no such strange doctrines. We have had clergy, good men with wives and chicks i’ Milan, these centuries back, an’ we be no Sodom.

Arnulph. I know not your customs, but in the name of Holy Church, I Arnulph, hereby command ye on pain of deepest Hell hereafter, that ye abstain from all masses made or performed by any priest who continues in this unholy state, for I tell you be he priest, archdeacon, bishop or archbishop, he is accursed, and doubly accursed.

Gellert. Thine be a big curse indeed, an’ by ’r Lady, thou moutheest it well.

Clerk. Dost thou tell us our good pastor be in mortal sin because he liveth with a good wife as do other men?

Arnulph. Have I not said it?

Gellert. Then art thou a brazen liar, an' comest thou down, I will give the non of it on thy brazen chops, thou leathern-lunged Varlet of Satan.

Arnulph. Dog of Hell, the arm that toucheth me Heaven will wither. !

(*A great clamor arises.*) *Enter GERBHERT, the Parish Priest.*

Gerbhert. What meaneth this disturbance i' my parish? I thought I ruled a peaceful, God-fearing people, an' not a brawling rabble.

Gellert. Pray, good Father, 'tis yon loud-mouthed Dog of Satan, hath insulted you an' all Milan by his mad heresy.

Gerbhert. Insulteth me, good Gellert? (*to Arnulph*) Who are you who without my license come disturbing my flock with thine unseemly harangues? Come down from yon pulpit! (*To the crowd.*) Good People, in God's name, go home.

Arnulph. Nay, I will not come down till I have delivered this my message to this foolish mob, an' to thee, thou carnal-minded Priest. In the name of the Holy Church I exhort ye,—

Gel. He saith, Pastor Gerbhert, that thou canst no more make masses, being a wedded man.

Gerb. (*To ARNULPH.*) Be this true?

Arn. It is true, by the Mother of God. An' thou wilt feel it too ere thou art an hour older.

Gerb. Nay, Man, thou art mad, this cannot be!

Ar. 'Tis even so as we be Holy Church's men.

Gerb. Ha! art thou not Aried, once of Rome?

Ar. Yea, I am that same Aried.

Gerb. Then tell me Aiald, by our one-time friendship, that this man be mad, an' his message but a foolish doctrine.

Ar. Nay, Gerbhert, but 'tis thou art foolish, an' this law but too true, thou must obey.

Gerb. Then will I fight this mad heresy, this inhuman code. That we must give up our wives an' babes, our pure homes, an' all that is holiest on earth! Nay, it cannot be! 'Tis devilish!

Ar. But thou must obey or be driven out.

Gerb. Aiald, thou knowest my Margaret, thou knowest her sweet nature, her holy conversation. She hath no devil, that her loving should make me unworthy.

Gel. 'Tis damnable, good Father. But give me the word an' we will trounce them out o' the market.

Enter MARGARET, the Priest's Wife.

Marg. Gerbhert! Gerbhert! Good citizens have you seen the pastor? Mother Bernard, poor soul, needeth the last rites, she be dying.

Gel. Aye, thou wert ever an angel of mercy from heaven to the sick an' poor.

Marg. What aileth thee, Gerbhert? What may be the matter?

Gerb. Come hither Margaret, this man telleth me
So strange a thing, I know not if he be mad
Who sayeth it, or I who hear his words.
He sayeth I am no more a priest of God
While I'm thy husband.

Marg. Not priest of God while thou art husband? Nay!
But he is mad indeed, for thou art both,
A good kind pastor, as these people know,
And as I know, a good and loving husband.

Gerb. He saith 'tis some new law within the church.
He saith in sooth, sweet Margaret, I must either
Put thee away or leave the priesthood.

Marg. An' what say you, my Gerbherth?

Gerb. That I will fight it to the bitter end,
I will be both or there's no God in Heaven.
Ariald, thou knowest my good Margaret,
The woman of my choice, my youth's one love,
I will not give her up. The Holy Father
Shall know of this strange doctrine. He snall judge
'Twixt thee and me.

Arn. Know then thou carnal Priest that even now
He hath decided; 'tis by his own will
That we be here, here is his written word.

(Holds up the POPE'S Bull.)

Yea, further, you shall choose you even now.
Thou shalt not shrive yon dying woman, till
Thou hast renounced this woman.

Gerb. My sweet Margaret, put your trust in me.
(To ARNULPH.) Thou cruel preacher, show me yon dread
Whose horns do even now rend me. Tell me now [bull,
'Tis but a lie and not great Hildebrand's.
I knew him once, he seemed a kindly man,
And never one to part a wife and husband.

Gel. Let me see yon paper, let me see thou liest.
Nay, 'tis the Pope's name. This be a damned world!
Good Father Gerbherth, tell us if this paper
Be what he saith? *(Hands paper to GERBHERT, who reads.)*
(MARGARET goes near GERBHERT.)

Gerb. Margaret, come not so near, O Margaret come not
so near,—I love thee Margaret—but—O my God!

Marg. Gerbherth, Gerbherth, thou wilt not desert me,
Remember our sweet-babe.

Ar. Margaret, touch not that man, he is God's own.
Leav. him.

Arn. Even so. Wouldst thou curse him with thy touch?

Marg. Evil Man, good Friends, forgive my misery.

But even now, as I did pass our home,
I left his little one, and mine, asleep,
His sweet face pillowed on his rosy arm,
I bent and kissed him, he did look so like
His father, and now good friends forgive me, it is but
A passing madness, but it seemed these men
Had built a wall of hideous black between
Me and my husband.

Gerb. Margaret, hark ! as thou lovest me !
Nay, touch me not, I am a banished man,
Good Friends, brave Gellert, pardon my poor feelings.
For I am now afflicted by dread heaven
For some gone, unknown sin of my past youth.
Perchance I murdered one in hideous sleep,
Strangled some infant on its mother's breast,
Violated some pure sanctuary ;
That this dread blackness lieth on me now.
O Margaret, thou art springtime vanished past,
And this be autumn all dead leaves and rain,
With all of mem'ry's summer 'twixt us twain,
To think and dream forever. Forgive, my friends,
This week unseemliness in me your pastor.
I ever did love mercy, dealt but tardily
With those who seemed to suffer more than sin,
Looked up to heaven and led my people, trusting ;
And now I am brought beneath the cruelest hand
That ever pointed two roads to a man.
Arnulph, Ariald, forgive my former heat,
You do but your bare duty. Friends they're right,
And I your whilom pastor in the wrong.
For I mistook the face of earth's poor love
And dreamed a stair of human happiness
Did lead to Heaven. See me now rebuked.
'Tis the Pope's will. Arnulph, read thou this.
I charge thee, as the pastor of this parish,
That you leave out no word however hard,
Nor soften down one sentence of this curse,
Or its conditions.

Arn. Of a surety I'll not.

Ar. He shall not ! And harken, you, good people, do you listen !

Marg. Gerbhart, come home, I will not hear that curse
That parts us twain. My breaking heart it seems
Doth hear our baby cry.

Arn. Silence Woman !

Marg. You would silence the angels. Work you this deed,
I tell you Man, you shut all Heaven out
And let in Hell, you desolate God's glad homes
By your brute ministry that knows not love.

Arn. The love of heaven knoweth not carnal love.

Marg. Forgive me Sir ! Stern Sir ! would woman's tears
But move you, would woman's pleaded prayers
But change you to the softest kindly thought,
I would beg of you, read not that curse.

Arn. Silence, Woman !

Gerh. Margaret, by your love for me, be silent.

Arn. (*Reads.*) In the name of God, amen : Gregory the
Seventh by the will of Heaven, Pope, Vicar of Christ,
successor of Holy Peter, sendeth greeting to all
Christian peoples, and commandeth, that any priest
living with a woman in the so-called marriage state;
shall be accursed :—that any person who receiveth at
his hands any or more offices of Holy Church shall
also be accursed.—That furthermore, all offices so
exercised by him shall not only be rendered null and
void of all good effect, but shall rather be regarded by
Holy Church as acts accursed. That this same law be
proclaimed in all parishes throughout Christendom.
Know ye that this be my will.

Signed,

GREGORY.

Marg. Gerbhart, O God, Gerbhart, where art thou ?

Gerb. Margaret, touch me not, we must obey
When Heaven speaks.

Marg. Not when it utters thunders such as this.

Arn. Choose, Gerbhart, twixt this woman and thine office.
Take her with thee to Hell, or both win Heaven.

Gerb. I have chosen, let me go and die.

Marg. O Gerbhart, come and kiss our little babe,
Say one good-bye, to home, before you go,
I'll not detain you, I say it on my knees,
I'll not detain you.

Gerb. Margaret, would you curse us with your love?
I can hear the Holy Father's voice
Though he's in Rome, saying, nay, nay, to thee.
Farewell, Margaret, we will meet in heaven.

(Goes out with ARNULPH and ARIALD.)

Marg. Nay, I am mad, 'twas this o'er nursing did it.
Gerbhart, tell me, tell me, I am mad.
Good friends, O pardon your poor Margaret.
O who will lead me home!

[Curtain.]

SCENE II.—*Place, Home of Pastor Gerbhart. Enter*
CATHERINE, Mother to MARGARET.

Cath. What can keep her, what can keep her? Oh, here
she comes. *(Enter MARGARET, weeping.)*

Marg. Mother, Mother, take me, take me home.
Home? Where be home? Are not these walls familiar?
Did they not mean the place where we had dwelt,
And hoped and loved? And what are they made now,
But empty phantasies of a broken past?
O Mother, Mother, bring me to my child,
The world is dead, the world is aged and dead.

Cath. My God, my God, Margaret, are you mad?

Marg. My husband ! Oh, my husband !

Cath. Gerbhart ! What of Gerbhart ? Is he dead ?

Marg. Aye, dead to me.

Cath. You speak in riddles, daughter.

Marg. Life is a hideous riddle unto some,
That it were better they had never solved.

Cath. Margaret, I am your mother. Tell me quick,
Gerbhart, where is Gerbhart ? Will he come ?

Marg. He will never come. O Mother ! O Mother !

Cath. What are your words ? Where hath he gone, my
Child ?

Marg. How can I tell you ? 'Tis the church's will
That he must leave me, I must be no wife,
Or he no husband. The Pope hath sworn it.

Cath. The Pope ! The Pope, you say ?

Marg. Aye, the Pope.

Cath. Nay, not the Pope. You are dreaming, dreaming,
This working with the sick, hath turned your brain. [Child,

Marg. Nay mother, 'twere a blessing, were I mad.
'Tis only but too true, I heard it now
Out in the market. Gerbhart heard it too,
And he hath gone. O God ! yes he hath gone,
And on his face the doom of Death was writ.

Cath. Mother of heaven ! and it hath come to this.
Is there no God, that men in heaven's name
Break up earth's homes, and make a waste like this ?
Daughter, Margaret, where hath Gerbhart gone ?

Marg. Let me die. But let me die in peace.

Cath. Nay, nay, this shall not be, this hideous law
Must drift aside. Daughter, harken me.

Marg. There is no hope. The Pope hath willed it so.

Cath. Nay, he will hear me, I will make him hear.
I have a secret you have never known,
Nor any in Italy.

Marg. The Cardinals at Rome will never hear thee.
Gregory will never, never hear thee.
'Tis vain.

Cath. Fear not for me, I will at once to Rome
And crush this evil matter, get his will
To bring back Gerbhart, if he will not harken,—

Marg. We can but die !

Cath. I will go and make all matters ready,
So early dawn surprise me on my journey.

Marg. Nay, mother, leave me not. I feel as if
All life were desolated. Leave me not.

(Her child cries within.)

Yea, my sweet fatherless babe, I'll come to thee,
Not all Rome's Popes can say nay, nay, to that. *(Goes within)*

Cath. (Going out.)

O, thou that cursed me in mine early days,
And cast this shadow all across my life ;
Wilt thou now add this sorrow to mine age ?
And darken my last years ? Is there no God ?
O, Night, who art the same, whose stars look down
On peace and madness, human joy and pain,
If there be help within thy mighty depths
For earth's poor creatures, help me, help me, now. *(Goes out.)*

Enter ARIALD.

Ar. She is alone. My power, this is thine hour.
Margaret ! Margaret !

Enter MARGARAT eagerly.

Marg. O, Gerbhart ! Have you come ?

Ar. Margaret !

Marg. Sir !—O cruel disappointment ! I had thought
It were my husband.

Ar. 'Tis but a friend.

Marg. Then Friend, bring back my husband, bring him
On my knees I beg it. [back

Ar. I may not, Margaret, Heaven only hath power
To stay your parting, think no more on Gerbhart.

Marg. Then wherefore here ?

Ar. In pity for your sorrow I have come.
A wedded woman, yet no longer wed,
So young and fair, so helpless to protect
Yourself and child against this wicked world :
Yea, I would help you.

Marg. My heart, had it but room for else than sorrow
Would thank your kindness. You can help me best
By bringing back the father of my child,
The friend who onetime loved you.

Ar. It cannot be, in all things else than that
My power can help you. You sin grievous sin
When you still mourn him.

Marg. Nay, nay, if sin, then life is all one sin,
One hideous hell, and God but a great devil.

Ar. Woman, you blaspheme.

Marg. Nay, rather thou blasphemest, teaching me
That human love, be contraband to heaven.
Not all your Popes and Cardinals standing by,
Can make me, looking on my baby's face,
Forget his father.

Ar. Margaret, by this love you bear your child,
Forget this Gerbhart. He was never yours.
By right divine, he ever was Holy Church's.
You only damn his soul, do you succeed.

Marg. Never ! never ! This be hideous, hideous !
My womanhood calls out against this lie.

Ar. If you are wise you will forget this man.
I tell you he is dead to you and earth.
A few short years for prayer and cloister tears,
Are all that's left him. Margaret you are fair,
And young and budding for the joys of earth.
Forget this Gerbhart. There are other men
Would seek thy love.

Marg. What mean these words? Insult not this my sorrow.

Ar. Margaret, if thou wouldst only but trust me,
My love is thine.

Marg. Thou devil !

Ar. Margaret, know my power. Thou art alone,
With me to make thy life a hell or heaven.

Marg. Nay, I have God. O heaven, show thy face
Through this dread blackness !

Ar. Not God nor any can give thee succor now.
Thy husband dead to thee forever more,
Choose ! Black Starvation knocketh at thy door !
Pity thy child if thou wilt not thyself.
I have long loved thee, Margaret, trust to me,
Bethink thee of thy child.

Marg. Out ! out ! Blasphemer ! If the Church be vile,
If justice be swept from earth and pity dead,
Though devils walk this world, though God be gone,
Know, there be left one righteous woman's scorn
For such as thee.

Ar. When thou dost see bleak desolation come,
Gaunt, burning hunger fill thy baby's eyes,
Thou'lt come to me.

Marg. If thou be Satan, thou black Prince of Fiends,
Thou wearest this man's form, thou firest his heart.
(*To ARIALD*) Go ! Devil ! ere I forget my womanhood. Go !

Ar. (*Going out.*) Remember !

Marg. If there be nothing in this world for me,
I have a friend no priest nor Pope can take,
Whose name be Death.

[*Curtain.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A room in the Papal Palace at Rome. Enter*

HILDEBRAND *as Pope and* PETER DAMIANI, *a fanatic.*

Hild. Know, Peter, I am a man of single purpose,
To make all Europe bow to Peter's knee,
To build the power of God o'er human thrones,
And humble kings to Christ by me His Legate.

Pet. Now, thou art Hildebrand.

Hild. To make the Crown subservient to the Cross
In all things ; kill out simony ;
And make the church sole granter of all fiefs
In bishopric or abbey ; hold all kings
In spiritual feudality to my will,
To wear or doff their crowns at word of Heaven,
As represent in me, God's vicarate.

Pet. There spake Peter, indeed.

Hild. For this same reason I carry this purpose now,
To separate humanity from the church,
And re-create a world within this world,
A kingdom in these kingdoms, alienate
From all the loves and ties that weaken men,
By rendering all the priesthood celibate,
Espoused only unto Holy Church.

Pet. Wilt carry this purpose to the bitter end ?

Hild. Yea, will I, unwife I half the world.

Pet. Now will God's kingdom rise and Hell's go down,
With man's presumption. Now we'll get our hands
Clutched at the throats of all these bloody princes.

Hild. Yea, Peter.

Pet. Ha, ha, thou, too, hast a hate for kings.

Hild. Whoever saw a monk who loved a king ?
The king was ever our natural enemy.

But see in me no heaven-brooding monk,
But many men in one, a pope, a king,
A fierce ambition, like a burning flame,
To put these times and peoples 'neath my feet,
And conquer empires to my finger's will,
So that I nod, and all kings nod with me.
'This be the ruling passion of my life.
It saved me from the common daily sins.
Dost thou know, Damiani, I once loved
A woman, even as other men have loved,
Did marry her, o'ercome by human passion ;
But driven by the demons of my fate,
Fled from her unto a monastery,
Where nights of prayer and fasting weaned my heart
To larger hopes and cravings. Never since
Have I set eyes upon my youthful love
Nor heard of her, though sometimes in my dreams
She comes back like a nightmare to my heart.
'Tis strange that heaven makes our being so.
But she hath gone, a phantasma upon
The fading walls of my heart's memory.
I will not dwell upon her.

Pet. Gregory, thou wouldst do well to keep
A guard upon thy passions.

Hild. Dost know me Peter ? I am Hildebrand.
The ages after they will know of me,
As one who ruled himself and all the world
With iron hand, who changed the course of nature,
And rode unmoved o'er rivers of human tears
For God's high glory.

Pet. Unwife the priests ! Unwife the priests ! 'Tis my
[life's passion]

Hild. Peter, Peter, thou art over-hard on woman,
She is not all the devil thou hast thought her.

Pet. Yea, devil ! devil ! Mention not the name !
They are all devils, even thy holy Princess.

Hild. Peter !

Pet. Yea, Gregory, I will say it to thy face.
'Tis not the Pope she leans on, 'tis the man.
I tell thee Hildebrand, Beatrice loveth thee,
And thou art Pope. O Woman, Woman, Woman !
Thou Satan's agent for to damn this world !

Hild. Ah, Peter, thou much mistakest Beatrice !
If ever a daughter of the Mother of God
Did move with saintly footsteps o'er this earth,
'Twas Beatrice. All Holy homes of God
Within her happy Duchy rise to bless her.
The grateful poor who dwell in her own cities
Would do her reverence. Peter, thou art mad
On this one subject. Now to another matter.
Here is the map of Europe, all mine own.
The red Wolf of the Normans he may growl,
The Tigers of the south may snarl and whine,
But all are mine, are mine. I hold all sheep,
The many flocks who go to make my fold.

Pet. Yea, thou wilt shear them, Hildebrand.
But what of Henry ?

Hild. That name ! that name ! I would that this same
Were shut in hell ! Of Europe's many kings, [Henry.
This Henry is the one I fear the most.
These dogs of Italy, hounds I hold in leash
To tear each other when they'd throttle me.
The Norman William hath his own affairs.
He is a heathen hound whom I would use
To keep my Christian sheep in quiet fold,
France hath her ills whereof I know full well,
But Henry ! Henry is the name I hate !
His is the other name that stands for Rome.
My hope is this, if I can only put
This arrogant emperor underneath my foot,
As this same parchment, (hear it crunch and crack !)
So I'd crush him and make me emperor,
Then mine would be the single will of Europe.
This is my aim.

Pet. Why dost thou pander then? He laughs at thee
And all thy legates, moves his licensed way
As though no Mother Church held holy sway
In his dominions, selleth bishoprics
And abbeyes, and making mock allegiance
Laughs in his sleeve at thee, the Pope of Rome.

Hild. Let him laugh, his scorn will eat him yet.
The day will come when he will cease to laugh,
For I am Hildebrand, I bide my time.
I hold a physic that will purge his pride
Of all its riches.

Pet. Give him that physic quickly, Hildebrand.
Thou art not fierce enough. Use, use thy power,
Ere it deserts thee. What be this power?

Hild. The Papal curse.

Pet. Yea, use it Gregory, use it even now.

Hild. Wait, Peter, thou wilt see a picture yet,
Wilt hear a music that will like thine ears,
Thou wilt see Henry, Monarch of half Europe,
The man who scoffs at monks, and uses men
As players, would poor chessmen for his use
To play with, thou wilt see this man
Shorn of his greatness, blasted like some trunk
Out in a wasteland, suing with suppliant knee,
And begging his royalty from the carpenter's son.

Enter a Page, who kneels.

Page. Your Holiness, Ambassadors wait without with
letters from Normandy, (*presents letters.*)

Hild. (*Reads.*) To his Holiness, the Lord Pope of
Rome, William of Normandy sendeth greeting; Holy
Father thine obedient son and ally, William, Prince of
the Normans, who is about invading England for the
purpose of putting the outlawed Saxon under the
power of Holy Church, would humbly beseech thy
immediate public blessing on his undertaking. This
land be sworn by Harold in fief to William, on the
bones of holy saints.

[Signed] WILLIAM.

Hild. Ha, Insolent !

Pet. Writeth he thus to the successor of Peter ?

Hild. Insolent ! Ally, ally to me, Gregory.
Immediate, poor suppliant truly this.
Ah, Europe, Europe, thou art hard to grind.
This rude wolf would make a bargain, aye,
'Tis little he doth care for Holy Church.
He'll filch my England's abbeys, waste her towns,
To fill his Norman lusts. Yet he is strong.
I'll use this wolf to bow the Saxon neck.

Pet. Send him thy curse.

Hild. Nay, Peter, he would laugh and throat it down
In Rhenish flagon. What cares he for Popes
But for his uses ? I will send my curse
Some other day, to-day will go my blessing.
My curses I have need of for this Henry.
(*To Page.*) Show them in.

Enter Ambassadors.

Hild. You come from Normandy.

1st Am. Yea, my lord, we would pray your holiness' bles
[sing.

Hild. Then you have it.
My heart is ever with my Norman children.
Would that they loved war less and peace the more.
O Angel of Peace, when wilt thou compass Europe ?
Tell William he is my well-beloved son,
High in my favor, take my blessing to him,
God's mercy goes to England when he goes,
And Holy Church's curse on all his foes.

Pet. Amen.

Ambs. My lord, our thanks. We are blest indeed.

Hild. (*To Page.*) Bring hither our most costly banner.
(*Page brings banner.*) (*HILDEBRAND takes banner.*)
May all who fight beneath thee ever conquer,
And heaven strike the foe that meeteth thee.

(*Gives the banner.*) Take this banner to our well-beloved William of Normandy, and say thus to him,—
That sending him this we make him, William of England.

Amb. We will, Your Holiness.

Hild. My blessing with you. By him who maketh kings,
Go you propitious.

Exit Ambassadors.

Hild. They came in proud, they went out meek enough.
Give me but time and I will tame all wolves
From Alps to Appenines.

Enter Page.

Page. More ambassadors await without, your Holiness.

Hild. From whence?

Page. Germany, your Holiness.

Hild. Ha, ha, now, we meet another matter.

Pet. Now thou growest iron.

Hild. Yea, then I gave with smiles what I owned not
Now here with sternness I would hold mine own.
There is no Pope while there's an Emperor,
'Tis my chief creed. Give me the letter.

(*Reads*) Ha, what be this? Refuses to retire
The German abbot he made without my leave,
Tells me that being king he holds in fief
All power of benefice. The hound! the hound!
I'll make him stoop. I'll crush his pride out yet.
Yea, more, he says he's coming soon to Rome
To take his crown of Empery at my hands,
Then craves my blessing, sent him with all speed,
"Your filial son." A filial son, indeed,
A son of Hell, was fitter sonship. Peter,
This king makes me a devil.

Pet. Send him thy curse, thy ban, 'twere fitting answer
To such a message.

Hild. Nay, I will try him yet, not that last move,
Till lesser fails. Call in the Cardinals.

Cardinals *file in*, Ambassadors *are brought in*.

Hild. You come from His Majesty, Henry of Germany."

Amb. We do, your Holiness.

Hild. It grieves me much that our unfilial son
Should keep from Holy Church those ancient powers
Given to her of old and handed down,
Gifts to Peter.

Amb. What be these powers, your Holiness?

Hild. Powers of right, powers of gift, powers of office,
Powers to lose and bind, lift and lower, bless and ban.

Amb. Hath she not yet those powers, my Lord?

Hild. Nay, nay, and never shall until she may
Enforce those powers, by other stronger powers.
Abbeys, Bishoprics, Priesthoods, whose are these?
Peter's or Cæsar's? Gregory's or Henry's?

Amb. The king saith not, my lord.

Hild. Tell Henry, our undutiful son, so soon
As he doth show his fealty to the Church,
By rendering up to her those pristine gifts
Of benifice, and giveth to her hands,
What unto her belongs, so soon will she
Grant him her blessing. Tell him, mighty Peter,
Christ's Vicar and ambassador of God
Speaketh by me, the seventh Gregory,
Calling unto him to do my will,
Or dread my curse.

Amb. Yea, my Lord.

Hild. Tell him that He who makes and unmakes,
Lifts and lowers, thrones and dethrones,
Speaks by me.

[*Exit Ambassadors, Cardinals and PETER.*

Page. The Countess of Canossa awaits without, my Lord.

Hild. Show her within.

Enter BEATRICE.

Hild. My gentle Countess, saintly Beatrice,
Welcome to my first royalty of Heaven.
Thou comest to me as cometh the evening star
After the heat and turmoil of the day,
Shedding the beauty of thy womanliness
On my rude cares. How fares Canossa?

Beat. O, Hildebrand, I come to thee no star,
But rather as a brook to some great river,
I flee me to the succor of thy presence.

Hild. Doth he so use thee, our one flower of women?
The brute, the beast, hath he maltreated thee?

Beat. Nay, not that yet, but leagues him, I much fear,
With that mad King of Germany.

Hild. Henry, agen!
Wait a little yet, we'll heal that ulcer.

Beat. You know poor Bishop Gudrun, he is dead.

Hild. Nay, when died he? He was a goodly priest.
But scarce a zealous pastor. So he's gone?

Beat. When I would come to thee to fill his place,
Canossa, with a loud and brutal laugh,
Says, nay, the Emperor must fill the chair
And at his prayer the licentious Prince hath sent
One of his courtiers, some rude, worldly man,
To fill the benefice. He laughs at thee,
And puts thy new reforms to open scorn.

Hild. Wait, sweet Beatrice, water not thy face
And weaken not my heart with thy sad tears.
Canossa knoweth not he hath an enemy
More deadly than he fears, who is a devil.
Did I but let him loose and he would sweep
Earth and Italy clear of such Canossas.
O Beatrice, this is a world of woes,
And I being many men have many woes,
I climb so many hills my feet grow weary;

Now, I'm a king and fain would rule this earth,
Now am a saint and fain would purge its ills,
Now am a priest and fain would throttle its wills,
Again the man with all a man's desire
To feel and hate and love as other men.
O Beatrice, I would I were deep heaven
To wear so pure a star upon my breast.
When I see thee, this world with all its cares,
Its hard ambitions, hates and hellish battles,
Doth vanish past, like day at evening's hour,
When only sweet thoughts stay. Must go so soon?

Beat. Yea, My Lord, but I will come again.

Enter an Abbot and several Monks dragging an old man with a long beard, who is accused of witchcraft. The Abbot and Monks fall on their faces. The old man stands.

Hild. Stand! (*They all stand up trembling.*) Who be this?

Ab. Most Holy Pope, Vicar of Christ, Lord of the Church, Keeper of the Keys;—

Hild. Nay. Make thy speech brief!

Ab. Most Holy,—that is to say, we are accursed.

Hild. Even so. Ye look it. Proceed!

Monks. Yea! yea! um! um!

Ab. Yea, Most Holy, we be much accursed by reason of yon cursed—(*The old man takes out some tablets and seating himself on the floor proceeds to calculate*)

Ab. Yon, yon—

Hild. Say on, Sirrah! Accursed? hast lost thy tongue? (*Abbot and Monks all groan.*) Speak on or means shall be found to make thee!

Ab. Nay, nay, Most Holy! He be cursing us now wi' his deviltries. I may not mention his name because of the blight. Wilt thou not bless me so that I may proceed unharmed?

Hild. (Makes the sign of the cross.) Yea, tis done. Proceed!

Ab. (Growing bolder.) Yon cursed dog of a sorcerer hath bewitched us all.

Monks. Yea, yea, Most Holy.

Hild. He hath then but little to do.

Ab. Nay, Most Holy, he hath done much.

Hild. (To Wiz.) Stand up! *(the wizard remains sitting, gazes at HILD., then at Monks, then returns to his calculations.)*

Hild. Wilt thou stand up? *(to Monks)* Make him!

Ab. and Monks. Nay, nay, he be making devils wheels at us now, even now we be dead men.

(The old man finishes his calculation, then rises slowly and approaches HILD.) Hast thou sent for me?

Hild. Who art thou?

Wiz. I am the centre, Macro, acro, Magister, ha! ha! ha!

Hild. (To AB.) What hath he done?

Ab. Oh, Oh, Most Holy, everything.

Hild. Name his offence.

Ab. He hath lamed Brother Benedict, rheumed Brother Isaac, physiced Brother Petrice, hath slain Brothers Wildert, Gebert an' Andrice, hath tied us all up by the heels to the devil, an' hath bewitched the whole convent.

Hild. (To Wiz.) Hast done this?

Wiz. Hast done what? mensa, mensae, mensae, ha! ha! ha! *(sits down and proceeds to make angles and circles.)*

Ab. He be ever like this, Most Holy, as thou seest.

Hild. Will he not understand? I would know his manner of thought.

Ab. It is by reason of his magic and his great age, Most Holy.

Hild. How old be he?

Ab. Some say one thousand, some five hundred,, but the most three hundred and fifty years, Most Holy.

Hild. Nay! How do you converse with him?

Ab. We hang him by the thumbs till he answer, that be one way.

Wiz. (*Shakes his fist at AB.*) Macro, acro, sacro, ha, ha, ha.

Hild. This man be mad.

Wiz. Yea, all mad, mad, prayers, fasts, prayers, saints, tinkle, tinkle, all mad, yea, they are all mad, acro, inacro, I am the centre, hear me.

Hild. Didst thou bewitch these? (*pointing at Abbot*
[*and Monks.*]

Wiz. Ha! ha! All swine, all swine.

Hild. Dost thou hear me?

Wiz. Ha, ha, three fat, three lean, one ascraggged, anti-monium a portion, nutgalls two portions, soak till midnight and go to couch with much fasting. Wouldst thou more?

Ab. Thou seest, Most Holy, he hath a devil. This same did slay three of our brothers with his devil's anti-monium or some such potion.

Wiz. They did desire to be fat. I did but potion them.
'Twere not my fault that they died of over-feeding.

Hild. Antimonium? Where didst thou get thy use for such a potion?

Wiz. By watching of the swine at their feeding. Some of this did by chance get mixed with their provender, and those that did eat of it grew quickly corpulent, and I,—thought me—

Hild. 'Twould suit the monks?

Wiz. Yea, but they overfed—

Hild. And died?

Wiz. Yea.

Hild. But these others—they accuse thee of their disorders.

Wiz. (*To Monks.*) Feed less, drink less, toil more, sleep less. Go not with the women, an your curse will leave you, ha, ha.

Ab. Nay, he hath a devil. We be church's men.

Hild. Ye look it, what else doth he?

Ab. He maketh magic. He hath a devil's wheel and he hath blasphemed saying he knoweth how many times the spoke of a wheel goeth to make the rim, thus meddling with matters abhorred. More, he saith the world be a ball, an floateth on nothing, the which we know to be a foul lie, seeing the Fathers have taught it be flat and standing on the foundations with Hell beneath.

Hild. (*To Wiz.*) Be this true?

Wiz. Yea, I am Magister, know all, cure all.

Hild. Canst thou cure disease?

Wiz. What wouldst thou have? Hast thou a flux, a frenzy, an evil eye, a gnawing of the tooth, a rheum, a discord, a gravel, a dysentry, a dropsy, a nightmare, an I can cure thee? The heart of a hen, the eye of a dragon, the tooth of a snake, the nose of a beetle caught twixt dusk and sunrise, all be a preventative against mala, medicanta. Yea, for all frenzies, camel's brain an gall, rennet of seal, spittle of crocodile, an blood of turtle, taken with much prayer be certain remedies.

Hild. Indeed, of a verity, man thou art much accursed with knowledge.

Wiz. Ha, ha. Wouldst try me?

Hild. Nay, I be well, and thou sayest this earth be a sphere?

Wiz. Yea, tis truth. See here.

Hild. And it floateth on nothing?

Wiz. Yea, yea, wouldst thou not learn? Wouldst thou not listen?

Hild. Ha.

Ab. Thou seest he hath a devil. He honoureth not even thee, Most Holy.

Wiz. (*To HILD.*) Wilt thou not listen? Art thou also as these fools? An age of fools! An age of fools! Macro, macro, I am the centre. (*Falls to calculating anew.*)

Hild. Peace, peace, Sirrah, I would hear thee agen on this strange matter. Thou wilt stay here. (*To the Ab. and Monks.*) And ye back to your monastery, and do as he saith, feed less, drink less, toil more, sleep less, and go not with the women, and I will remove your curse. Now begone!

Ab. and Monks. (*Bowing out.*) O holy father, we be much accursed!

Wiz. (*Shakes his fist at them.*) Acro, macro. (*They flee in great terror.*)

Enter PETER.

Pet. More woes, more woes, more woes, another woman!

(*Enter Page.*) A strange woman would see your Holiness.

(*Enter CATHERINE wrapt in a cloak. She advances and throws the cloak off.*)

Hild. Catherine!

Cath. Hildebrand!

Hild. 'Tis thou!

Cath. Yea, my Lord. Thy wife! (*Kneeling at his feet.*) O, holy Father, by all the love that once United our two hearts, I plead with thee, Have mercy on the daughter of thy love.

Hild. My daughter! nay, Woman, not so, not so!

Cath. Yea, I have sought thee out these many years,

Did track thee to thy monastery then here.
O save thy daughter, mighty Hildebrand.

Hild. (*Turns and covers himself with his cloak.*)
O Woman, Woman, I know thee not. Away!
I know not wife save only Holy Church.

Pet. Away! away! cursed Woman, away!
Presume not on Christ's Vicar, the great Pope,
The father of his people and the world.

Cath. O me! accursed me! I come not here
To curse thee, nor to bless, nor yet presume
To dare polute thy state by name of husband.
'Tis only but a common, human word
Belonging to the poor ones of this world:—
But to beseech the Holy Pope of Rome
To cover with corner of his mercy's mantle
The daughter of his loins.

Hild. O, Peter, Peter, take this woman away.

Pet. Begone Woman. Thou art sacreligious.

Cath. Nay, spurn me not, she is my only daughter,
I pray thee help her, tis a little thing,
For thee who hath so much of worldly power,
To lift thy hand and by a single word
Restore her happiness.

Hild. O Woman, what would'st thou ask?

Cath. She is our daughter, awful Hildebrand,
Married short time unto that goodly priest
Gerbert, of St. Amercia, at Milan.

Hild. O, God! O, God!

Cath. He is a holy clerk, well bred in orders,
Of good repute among his loving people,
Who look up to him as their Father in God,
Dwelling among them as the beckoning hand
Leading to heaven.

Hild. O, God! O, merciful God!

Cath. They have a little babe, a sweet, wee mite
Just come from Heaven.

Pet. Hence, Scorpion, know ye not this is the Holy
[Father?

Cath. Remove this curse, those terrible monks have
Upon his priesthood. [placed.

Hild. O Woman, I cannot, I cannot.

Cath. By all our former love! They cannot part!
He holds her as the apple of his eye,
She sees in him the man that God hath given.
Remove this awful curse.

Hild. Woman, thou speakest to a columned stone,
I am a marble. If I have a heart,
Thou'lt hear it beating, rock within this rock,
Thou art a sea that beatest my sides in vain.

Cath. Do I hear thee aright? Thou art adamant
Unto this piteous pleading of my heart,
Thou sendest thine only daughter, our sweet child,
Out into defenceless misery, breakest her heart.
Unnatural, unnatural, unnatural!
It seems but yesternight they said good-bye,
And now she sits and rocks her child and saith
Over and over agen its father's name.

Pet. Go, Woman, he is dead to thee and thine.
Hast thou no pity? Hast thou not one sigh
For this thy work?

(HILDEBRAND stands silently with his back to her, his cloak
wrapt about his face.)

Cath. Hast thou no pity? By all our past, one word,
One parting word.

Pet. Thou speakest to a stone. Go!

Cath. (Goes out wringing her hands.)
O, Agony, O Misery, Blackness, Hell,
There's no hope now.

SCENE II.—*The German Court, a Room in the Castle.*

Enter the QUEEN and an Attendant.

Att. This way, Your Majesty.

Queen. You speak me, majesty. I am no Queen,
The lowest woman in this mighty realm,
Reigning in some humble herdsman's heart,
Might top my queenship. O Henry, Henry,
What is there in my face, my form, my spirit,
That you should scorn me? Hath my essence changed,
Since by the holy altar facing Heaven
We plighted wedding troth; to less and less,
That you should hate me?

(Enter Bishop of Bamberg.) My Lord Bishop! *(kneels.)*

Bam. *(Lifting her,)* Nay, humble not thy lonely majesty,
Thy stately womanliness, most noble Margaret,
By such poor acts.

Queen. O, Bamberg, be my angel, my good guide,
Leading me by roads to Henry's favour.
Bring back his heart to its one-time allegiance,
And make earth's springtime laugh for me once more,

Bam. Nought in all my bishopric hath grieved me
Like this strange act of Henry's. I have spoke him
Happily in all save only this.
Patience, my Lady, patience, look to Heaven.
Perchance some day he'll know thy noble heart.

Queen. O, Bamberg, as the queen of this great realm,
More sacred, as the mother of his child,
I beg you get me audience. Did I plead,
His heart might soften.

Bam. Madam, thy wishes are to me commands,
I fear me much the issue in his mood,
But be my head the penalty, I will bring
You to him.

[Exit both.

[Curtain.

SCENE III.—*An Audience Room in the Castle. Enter Attendant. Enter HENRY in haste, with GILBERT a Lord.*

Hen. Now by my crown, I'll harry those villians out.
(*To the Page.*) Quick, wine! (*to Gilbert*) You say this news
This Saxon Rodulph, would pluck Henry down, [be true.
And wear his Empery. Ha, this likes me well!

Gil. 'Tis said, Your Majesty, the Saxon towns
Have all revolted.

Hen. And Rudolph leads them!

Enter BAMBURG.

Well, Bamburg, have you heard the latest news?
The North's revolted. Rodulph heads the Saxons
To conquer Germany and take my crown,
And on it all, this bold, insulting letter,
Reads me a lesson from His Holiness,
Yon arrogant priest, the scheming Pope of Rome.

Bam. Henry, as your father's oldest friend,
As your most faithful subject I would plead,
Be not o'er hasty in this sudden business.

Hen. Bamburg, I am sick of being a child,
You drive me mad by your pacific measures.
While you are dallying, they will ride me down
With squadrons and with curses. Nay, no more!
I'll ride me north and show mine enemies
I'll bring yon Rodulph's head upon a pike-pole.

Bam. What of this Roman message?

Hen. Call in the messengers. (*Enter a Cardinal and a*
(*To Ambs.*) Go you to Rome? [Roman bishop.]

Card. Yea, Your Majesty.

Hen. Go, tell your master, if he be the Pope
That I am Emperor, who can lift him down.
Tell him, in spiritual matters, Henry bows
To his opinion, in matters temporal, never!
This is my answer, safe speed you Romewards.

[*Exit Ambassadors.*

Bam. Your Majesty, before you go will see
But one more suppliant.

Hen. Nay, Bamburg, nay not now, I'm hurried.

Bam. By my love, I beseech you!

Hen. Is it so urgent? Well, be hasty Bamburg.
My troops await me, and my sword-arm aches
To hack yon Rodulph.

(*Enter Queen veiled.*) Who be this?

Bam. One who deserves your patience and your love,
If you love aught on earth, proud Henry.
Go you not forth to battle with your foes
Till you have made your spirit's peace with her,
Your realm's Queen, the mother of your child.

Hen. Bamburg, Bamburg, you trifle with my kindness.
This goes too far, know you that I am King!
One word and I will hale you to a dungeon
For this insult.

Queen. Henry, my Lord, one word before you go.
What have I done to gather all this hate?

Bam. Your Majesty may sever my poor body,
Mend you your love. Kill me, Henry, but
Murder not by scorn, the noblest love
That soul hath nourished. By these wintry hairs,
Though thou dost slay me, I will tell thee true
By this one act thou dost unking thyself.

Hen. No more, by heaven, no more, I know her not.
When will my subjects treat me less the child?
I am no ward now, and I ever hated
This foolish, enforced marriage. Let her Majesty
Get to some retirement. She demeans
Herself by these forced meetings.

[*Exit.*]

Queen. O Bamburg, I have lowered my queenliness
And cheapened my womanhood. I will no more.
Take me away.

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE IV.—*A monastery near Milan. Night. Enter two monks, BRUN, a fat little monk, and WAST, a tall, lean one, with an extremely ugly face.*

Brun. How he doth take on, this new Friar Gerbhart. I had not thought a man would lose his appetite for any woman.

Wast. Ah, Brun, you gluttonous men know not of love. Such dangerous passions are beyond thy ken, lacking the attractive, the magnetic, you descend to lower pleasures. Now look on me a victim to woman's fancy. Within those walls I find a haven from woman's importunities.

Brun. Verily, Brother, thou must have slain hearts.

Wast. It was my daily sorrow, so many beauties sought me. I could not walk the streets, but I were pestered. It did sorrow me much, I could not pity all the passions I awoke, so fled me here, sacrificing my prospects, my youth, my person, rather than light fires I could not quench. (*Eyeing himself in a metal hand-mirror.*) Alas, alas, Brun, my beauty falleth off sadly of late.

Brun. Yea, thou hast a haggard cast to thy looks. It wonders me much where all thy provender goeth, it doth thee so little service.

Wast. Ah, Brun, Brun, so many broken hearts, so many tender reminiscences. "But thou canst not touch my feelings. Yea, Brun, didst thou but know the former dignity, the port, the carriage of my person ; the flash, the majesty of my eye ; the symmetry, the moulding of my form ; thou wouldst but marvel at this ruin I am.

Brun. I doubt it not old Sucker, but let not thy former beauty fret thy present comeliness out o' countenance.

Wast. Nay Brother, I will so endeavor, but I am ever on the tremble lest some one of those former victims, in cruel desperation maddened, may find me here and

seize my person. Brun, wilt thou protect me in such extremity, wilt thou, Brother?

Brun. Yea, that I will, thou Wreck of former perfection. If any misguided person of that unfortunate sex be so seized by distraction as to make formidable attack upon thy classic person, she doth so on her peril, I promise thee, old much-afflicted, my hand upon it. Be the bottle finished? (*A knocking is heard without.*)

Wast. What be that sound? 'Tis she, 'tis she, at last! O me, O me, what will I do? (*Gets behind BRUN.*)
Brun! Brother! wilt thou protect me?

Brun. Confusion take thee, Wast, now be a man.

Wast. Yea, yea, I be a man, that be my sorrow, ah, oh, what sh—all I do? (*Tries to hide himself in his cowl.*)

Enter other monks in great confusion.

All. What be that noise? what be th—at no—ise?

One M. (*Peers through the wicket and starts back in horror.*) 'Tis a—oh blessed Peter, 'tis a woman!

All. What shall we do? O blessed Peter! what shall we do?

Wast. I am undone, undone, my fatal beauty assails me even here.

Brun. Wast, quit thy folly, go close to the gate and question her wants.

Wast. Not me, not me, not for all heaven's riches?

All M's. Nay, nay, let her not in. (*knocking continues.*)
Let us pray, Brothers, let us pray. (*All huddle together.*)

Brun. Then if ye will not, then I must ere the Abbot comes.

Monks fleeing. Nay, nay, let her not in, a woman, a woman, a woman!
[*Enter Abbot.*]

Abb. Stop, Fools! (*All stop.*) Be it the Devil at your heels, ye flee so quickly?

All M's. A woman, a woman! (*Exit monks.*)

Abb. (*To BRUN.*) Open the gate. (*BRUN opens gate.— Enter MARGARET, worn by illness and starvation.*)

Abb. Woman, what want you here?

Marg. I want my husband. (*At the back of the stage, in a dimly-lit cell, behind a grating, GERBHERT is seen kneeling. He rises, at sound of MARGARET'S voice, a Monk holds a crucifix before him and he sinks back.*)

Abb. Whom do you call by so profane a title within these holy walls?

Marg. My husband, Gerbherth, vicar at Milan. O let me see him, our little one is dying. Where doth he linger alienated from his home? (*GERBHERT comes forward again, the Monk lifts the crucifix and he goes back wringing his hands.*)

Abb. This is his home, he knows no wife nor children, You must go hence.

Marg. If I called out unto these barren walls
And had they but a heart to hear my prayer,
Beneath their stony hardness they would open
To let me see him.

Abb. You must go forth, you blaspheme these pure pre-
Woman, go. [cincts.

Marg. Nay, drive me not forth, O holy Abbot,
By all you love, revere and hope on earth,
Drive me not forth, tear down this hideous wall
That hides me from my husband, let him know,
'Tis only for a little, little while,
Did he but know our little one was ill,
He'd hasten in the first impulse of sorrow,
At its slight cry, he'd be all shook with pity,
And now its dying. Gerbherth! Gerbherth! come!
Where are you Gerbherth?

Abb. You must go hence, or I will force you hence.

Marg. I have no soul to curse you, your own soul
Be its own Hell for this unnaturalness. [Goes out.
I come, my fatherless one, to die with thee.
To die with thee.

(GERBHERT bounds forth.)

Gerb. Margaret! (*shakes the grating.*) Margaret! (*The
Monk raises the crucifix, and Gerbherth follows it slowly
out.*)

[Curtain.

SCENE V.—(*Audience room in the Papal palace. Enter
HILDEBRAND wearing his purple robe of state and with
him PETER DAMIANI. Enter a page.*)

Page. An Ambassador waits without, your Holiness.

Hild. From whence? Germany?

Page. Yea, my Lord.

Hild. Ha, now, the tide went out, the tide comes in.
'Tis but the spray to mine own thunders. Now, we'll
hear his answer to the Papal Curse.

Pet. Wilt thou receive a message from one accursed?
He is no king, no ruler any more. This is no em-
bassy.

Hild. Perchance, it may be prayer for pardon. Henry
knoweth by this the power of Hildebrand.

Page. My Lord, it be but a rude petitioner hath come.
He tells no beads, nor maketh any prayers,
But rather stamps an' mutters, raves an' swears,
And sendeth Rome an' all her cardinals
'To Hell twice every minute.

Pet. Hale him to prison, the loud, blaspheming hound,
The damp of some rock cell would bring him round
To proper reverence for thy holy office,
He may intend a murder on thy person,
Let him not in.

Hild. Nay, but I will. Like master, like his dog,
I fain would see the issue of this cursing.
Yea, I would see this German foam at mouth,
Fear not, I'll match him, call the Cardinals in.

(*Exit Page. Enter Cardinals, who stand behind the Pope.*)

(*Enter the page, followed by the German Ambassador, who remains standing.*)

Hild. (*To Cardinals.*) On your lives keep peace whatever he doth do. Leave him to me. (*To the Ambassador.*) Kneel!

Amb. Nay, I'll not kneel to thee or other man
Till I have said my message.

A Card. Kneel, impious Man, 'tis the Lord Pope.

Pet. Hale him out, German Dog, Blasphemer,
He hath insulted the Holy Father.

Amb. (*Draws.*) Come on ye cowardly Monks, I scorn ye
Were he a king I'd bow my knee to him, [all,
An Emperor, an' I might buss his hand,
But only Pope, why popes have bribed me vain
'To slay your betters.

Hild. Silence : am I Pope indeed, why blame this man,
When ye, obedient, insult me with your clamors.

(*To the Amb.*) Hail you from Germany?

Amb. I do, proud Priest, my name is Wolf of Bamburg,
Cradled in a nest that ne'er knew fear,
Bred of a breed that hath a joy of killing.
'Tis not a monk would make me tremble here.
My time is short, I would repeat my message.

Hild. What be thy message?

Amb. 'Tis to thee, proud Priest, an' it doth come from
Henry.

Hild. Speak!

Amb. Henry of Germany, whom in thine insolence,

Thou cursedst with thy foulest blasphemies,
Sendeth me, Wolf of Bamburg, unto thee,
To hurl thine arrogant curses in thy face,
And tell thee thou art no pope but a damned priest,
Who stolest thy popedom.

Pet. Hale him out, tear him to pieces : (*A great clamor rises. The Cardinals would attack him.*)

Hild. Silence ! on your lives ! This man is mine ! (*To Wolf.*) Speak on !

Amb. He further saith to thee, thou bastard Pope,
As Emperor of Rome, come down, come down !
And leave that chair thou foully hast usurped,
And I his servant, say to thee, come down !

All Cards. Devil ! German Dog ! Tear him to pieces !
(*All rush forward.*)

Hild. (*Tears off his robe and throws it over the Ambassa-*
Back ! or fear my curse ! Who strikes at that [*dor.*]
Strikes me !

All. Nay, this is a devil.

Hild. Were he Satan himself, beneath that robe he were
As sacred as God's holiest angel !
(*To Amb.*) Go Man and tell thy master, who is no king,
That Gregory hath one single word for him,
And that is pity. Let him ask his God
To pardon him as I do pardon him.
I lay no curse upon the innocent.
When he comes penitent to me in tears
I will receive him. Go ! (*Exit Amb.*)
(*To Cardinals.*) Have ye no reverence for Gregory that,
Ye should revile revilings in this house ?
God's ministers should ever be men of peace,
And not a maddened rabble. As our Lord,
In that last season of his great martyrdom,
Bade holy Peter sheathe the angry sword,
So I rebuke ye. Had he s'ain me here,
You'd not have touched him !

[*Exit Cardinals.*]

Pet. Hildebrand, sometimes it thinketh me
Thou hast a magic, thou art the strangest Pope
Yet seen in Rome. That man, who came blaspheming,
Went out your slave.

Hild. Ah, Peter. know, we must meet fools with guile.
'Tis better to be subtle than be strong.
I sometimes dream the greatest innocence
Is but the mantle to the deepest guile,
And men but stab the deeper when they smile.

[*Curtain.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—(*A deserted camp.*) *Enter* HENRY *alone.*

Hen. What is a king's weak royalty to this Power
That lifts the crowns from kings and plucks them down
From earth-built majesties? I yesterday
Who wore a crown and called me Emperor
To these dominions, held a people's fear,
To bind or loose betwixt my hollow hands,
Made and unmade, held life and death in fee,
Made dukedoms tremble at my royal coming,
And at my beck squadroned the earth with armies,
Am at his word a lonely, outcast man,
A stranger to the lordships of command,
Holding less power than doth my meanest subject.
Then did all eyes but follow at my glance,
All hands lift to the twitching of my thumb.
Did I but hate, a thousand scabbards clanged
To do me vengeance. Had I a single longing,
A myriad hearts trembled to beat my bidding.
But now I am so mean earth's very slaves
Might pass me by, nor think to do me reverence.
What is this one man's Power, this mighty Will,
That lifts its hand, saith suddenly yea or nay,
And peoples forget their duty to their lords,

And nobles forfeit reverence for their kings
And all of royalty's golden splendor is wrecked
And shattered like a rainbow in a storm !
O Gregory, O Gregory, thou awful man,
Didst thou but speak I might become a clod,
Or weed or senseless turf beneath thy feet.

Enter the Bishop of Bamberg and a noble.

Hen. Come now and strip me, let my very life
But follow my royalty.

Bam. O, my poor Liege !

Lord. Yea, they have left him lone enough indeed.
Damn this Pope's cursing.

Hen. Why call me Liege ? The king hath gone, my Lord.
He went out yesterday when Gregory's curse
Filled all this precinct. I am only Henry,
A leprous, palsied, outcast, damned man.
Where are my servants ? Have they fled me too ?

Bam. They have, my Liege !

Hen. Gregory thou mighty monster, what art thou ?
Thou art not God, for God at least is kind.
Thou art not nature, its workings are too slow
For such a sudden miracle. Why dost thou not
Take even my sight and hearing ? It 'mazes me
Those be not fled. Yea, even my Taste and Smell,
What blasphemous Ministers these that do my bidding
Against thy mighty word. Take all, take all,
And let me die.

Bam. Sire, lose not your courage. Even yet,
A few of us for love of Heaven and thee,
Defy this haughty prelate. Shake at Rome
Defiance of her curses. Though a million curs,
With tail twixt legs flee at a bit of writing,
Forget that they are men because one man,
Who thinks him God, would shake with his poor thunders
The cowards of Europe ; know that there be yet

A few hearts left thee. Gregory takes thy crown,
He hatb not got thy manhood, that obeys
The laws of thine own nature. Show this priest,
This blasphemous usurper of our humanities,
That he may strip the moss but leave the tree
Of all thy kingship standing.

Lord. Yea, my Liege, some swords be left thee yet.

Hen. And ye still own me? Fear ye not this curse,
That blacks the world, the very earth I stand on ;
Unkings me all, annuls my fatherhood,
Blasts all mine organs, refts me from my kind.
The very heaven must shut from me its light,
The stars no more look kindly, Night no more
Give me her holy balm, sweet, blessed sleep.
No friend, nor child, nor wife, this drives me out
Beyond the human. Say ye even yet
That ye do own me? This doth much amaze me.

Bam. We love thee yet and own thy majesty,
And kneel to thy allegiance.

Hen. If this were real, Henry's heart could weep
With human gladness, but 'tis merely fancy.
You'd shrivel up like podshells were you men.
The very ground I stand on is accursèd.
No more may flowers therefrom, but only thorns
And noisesome weeds proceed. Away ! away !
Ere ye be cursèd.

Bam. He seemeth distracted.

Lord. This curse doth lie full heavy of a truth.
Damn that Pope, if I but get to Rome
There'll be two Popes. I'll slice him i' the middle.
Yea, I'll create a fleshy schism 'twill bother
These damned, lewd priests to reckon.

Bam. My Lord, great Henry, hearken to thy friend,
'Tis Bamburg, he who loved thee as a child.
Dost know me ?

Hen. It seemeth I know thee Bamburg, or ought to know,
Did not this haze of Hell o'erweight me down.
I thought thee fled. Why dost thou stand with me?
Knowest thou not that I am one accursed?

Bam. Hath nature no pity?

Hen. Were it the Queen alone who fled I'd bear it.
I never treated her as she deserved.
She was too kind, I used her brutal, Bamburg,
I used her brutal, she who was so kind.
Her voice was soft, but this my heart forgot
In that forced marriage. Had she fled alone
I had not minded, but the ones I loved,
The men I made and builded, raised them up,
Who drank my cup, took honors from my hand,
And made the heavens ring with their acclaims
Were I victorious: that all these should melt
Like some magician's smoke at Gregory's word;
'Tis monstrous; yea, so monstrous, that meseems
The heavens be turned to iron and yon cold sun
Be but a tearless socket turned upon me;
And Pity and Mercy all those kindly ministers
Fled from the universe where Henry stands,
Yea, Bamburg, had the mighty Lord of all
Such power of unrelenting as this Gregory,
The very fountains of nature would dry up,
The kindly elements refuse their office,
And morn and even, noon and cooling night
With blessed dews and sunlight, cease to be;
Till earth would stand one shrivelled chaos under
The pitiless heaven that looks on Henry now.

Bam. 'Tis the Queen that we be come about my Liege,
'Tis she hath sent us.

Hen. To mock my sorrow with false courtesies,
To note my shame and carry to her ears
My misery. O iron Ones, have ye
No mercy left?

Bam. Nay, nay, my Liege, curse not but hearken me,

The noble woman we call Germany's Queen.
Sendeth unto Henry, greeting thus :
Though thou hast not an army thou hast love,
Though thou hast not a subject, yet a king
To her alone, her king of kingly men;
Though thou art cursed she still will keep to thee.

Hen. Oh Bamburg, this is worse than cursing, can kind
Hold such a blessing for a wretch like Henry ? [Heaven

Bam. It can and doth, Her Majesty waits without.

Hen. O, Bamburg I cannot see her, her true love,
Would so shame all my falseness all mine ill,
It seems her love would slay me. [Enter MARGARET.

Marg. Henry !

Hen. My Queen ! (*They embrace.*)
Gregory, O Gregory, where is thy curse ?

Marg. This is our child, look up, look up, my Liege,
Thy subjects may desert thee, Heaven doth not.

Hen. Gregory, O Gregory, where is thy curse ?
It seemed so heavy an hour ago that earth
And very heaven were weighted with its murk,
Yet now it lightens. I am a man agen.

[Curtain.

SCENE II.—(*Rise outer Curtain. A yard outside the
castle at Canossa. Enter two Monks telling their
beads.*)

1st M. By 'r Lady, t'was a rare sight, a rare sight, t'was
never known afore, nor ever be agen in Europe.

2nd M. He comes agen this morn, 'tis three days since
He's stood i' the courtyard suing Gregory's favour.

1st M. The king of Europe ! This be the Church's hope,
May every season send us a Pope.
I must within ere Brother John doth make
A fast which little fits my hunger's constant ache.

2nd M. T'wixt heady wine an' table well provide',
'Tis a faring world till coming Eastertide. [Exit.

Enter two Soldiers.

1st S. This Gregory hath given us such a sight
As makes all Germany ashamed for.
I'll never more hold jealousy of kings.
Better to bed upon old soaken straw
An' be a targe for pikepoles than be a king.

2nd S. He looked as though the whole world shot its
On his bare forehead, [darts

1st S. Yea, an' his poor Queen, didst see her sue
Upon her knees, to gain her lord's admission.
May such a sight ne'er greet mine eyes agen.

2nd S. See, now they come. It shames my soldierhood
To see a king ensuffer such dishonour.
He is no Pope would hold so black a malice,
To pluck from hell. Let's out. [Exit both.

Enter HENRY attired in rude clothes, bareheaded and barefooted, with a wisp of straw about his waist, and with him the QUEEN in black.

Queen. This way my Lord, perchance his stony heart
So beat upon by storming of our tears,
May soften its adamant.

Hen. 'Tis for Germany and thee, I do this penance,
And for our sweet boy's kingship, I, myself
Am all so calloused o'er by utter spite
Of too much curses showered by popes and fate,
It cares me little. Let the world go wrack,
The elements mingle in a loud confusion,
The maddened seas batten the ruined lands,
The forests shed their knotted limbs, the year
Be now all mad November. I am but
A wasted trunk whereon no brutish fate
Can wreck its malice. I am so annuled
Were all the devils of hell carnated popes,
Thundering anathemas on my stricken head,
T'would not appal me. I am come to this.

Queen. Thou wilt meet him fairly, thou wilt think
Not on thy woes, but on thy dear son's hopes.

Hen. Fear not Margaret, meeting such a devil,
Who thinketh him a God, but I'll dissemble.
I'm not the olden Henry that I was.
Mine inward pride will make mine outward meeker,
Subtility with subtility I'll match
To wipe out this dishonour. [*Knocks at the gate.*

Enter Warder.

Ward. Who be ye?

Hen. Henry of Germany, whose November storms
Have stript his Summer's royalty.

Ward. What would you within, Henry of Germany?

Hen. Knowest thou not, O Man, I am a King,
Though crownless, in these bleak, inclement times,
And this my sorrowful Queen. Wouldst thou not
Do her meet reverence?

Ward. We know no King but the Holy Pope of Rome.

Hen. I seek his presence. These three pitiless days,
All unavailing I have battered here
Humbling my royalty to his stern commands.
Were these gates less stony they would open.

Queen. O, Warder, mercy! Pray the mighty Pope,
A moment's audience. I am a stricken woman,
And this my husband, who, once called a King
Now doffs his kingship, garbed in penitence.
Hath he no pity?

Ward. His Holiness hath harkened to thy suit,
And, be thou penitent, would pardon thee,
These be my orders, pass you now within. [*Opens gate.*

Queen. Now, blessed be Heaven. Henry sink thy wrongs
In thy son's future.

Hen. Sink my wrongs? They have sunk so low,
That lower I cannot. Heaven but grant me space
Till I avenge me. [*Exit both.*

(*Rise inner curtain.*) *A chapel in the castle.*
Enter HILDEBRAND attended by Cardinals. Enter
BEATRICE and her train. Enter HENRY and the QUEEN
as before. The QUEEN kneels. HENRY stands.

Queen (to HEN.) Kneel ! kneel ! or all is lost.

Hild. Kneel ; proud Man, to Heaven.

Hen. Yea, I will kneel to Heaven (*kneels*), (*aside*) but not
[to thee.

Hild. Henry of Germany, Usurper. know that thus
Doth Heaven chasten holy Church's foes,
Not in hate or malice, but in love,
That showing earth more perilous, Heaven be safe,
Because of thy disloyalty to the Church,
Usurping those her ancient, holy rights,
Not holding thy kingship as given from her hand,
Hath angry Heaven stripped thee of thy crown,
Thy people and thy sceptre, rendering thee
The scornéd of the meanest outcast wretch
That hugs his rags in human wretchedness,
Abhorr'd and despised of those who once
Courté thy favour. Take this cruel lesson
Home to the prideful chambers of thy heart,
And know kings henceforth but as mortal men,
Their power ephemera of a summer day,
Be they not fief to Heaven. Be thy penitence
Sincere in this dread, humble hour of thine
Thou wilt become the vassal of high Heaven,
Mending thy future from thy sinful past.

Hen. (Aside) Great God ! am I a King ? What is a King ?
Is he a dog to dare be spoken thus ?

Queen, (aside.) Henry, for the love of Germany,
Me, and thy child, keep but thy patience now.
(*To HILD.*) O, Holy Father, curb thine awful anger,
Remove this curse that weighteth Henry down,
Makes him a fearful leper to his kind,
Restore his people's favour, thou hast the power,
And thou wilt do it.

Hild. Madam, thou true daughter of the Church,
Hath this man used thee well that thou shouldst sue
For him our favour? Hath he not been false
To thee, to Germany and Holy Church?
Thou art a woman, use a woman's art,
Break his presumption, soften his rude heart,
And we will soften ours. Meantime. to thee, [to HENRY
I would despatch my duty as high Pope
O'er my poor people, in this woeful world.
Know you, Henry of Germany, once a King,
But now a suppliant outcast at my feet,
Abandoned, abhorred of all true christian men,
The scorn alike of lowly and of high,
Know you I would be merciful a little.
For this cause I will now come down, come down,
As you through yours once blasphemously demanded,
From out my holy chair of sainted Peter,
And be like you, a single, naked man,
Leaving my cause with yours to mighty Heaven.

Cards. O, noble soul : O, noble princely heart :

An Abbot. Base Prince, base Prince, 'tis more than thou
[deservest.

Hild. Know, therefore, now, in presence of these men,
Members immaculate, of Holy Church,
That thou, through thy base agents and by mouth,
Didst charge me, Gregory, Prince of God on earth,
And Vicar of the mighty risen Christ,
With crimes unworthy of my holy state,
Heinous and awful, so hideous in their sound,
That they were better nameless, the tongue would fail
To use its office, giving them to the air.
Know, furthermore, that I in my high office,
Have placed thee under ban of Holy Church,
Shut out, abhorred and excommunicate,
Because of sins committed at thy hand,
Abhorrent and accursed in their nature,
Of which, God knows, I have the truest witness.

(Goes to an altar and taking a consecrated wafer, returns with it in his hand.)

Now, Henry of Germany, men may lie,
And even Popes be sinful, flesh is frail ;
But Heaven at last will judge betwixt us two. *(Raising the wafer. The Cardinals all draw back in fear.)*

If I be liar in the smallest part,
Deceitful or malicious in that judgment,
Wherewith I have judged thee, heaping crimes
Unspeakable and abhorrent on thy head,
May listening Heaven which is only just,
Strike me, impious, with its awful thunders
While I eat this. *[Breaks the wafer in two and eats half.*

A cry of wonder comes from the Cardinals. There ensues a pause of a few seconds, then he holds out the broken wafer to HENRY.

Henry of Germany, wilt thou do the same ?

Hen. (Starts back in confusion and horror.) Nay, nay,
'tis impious ! 'tis impious !

Cards. Guilty, guilty !

Hen. (Aside.) What influence be this I fight against ?
This devil doth ever p'lace me in the wrong.

Hild. Henry of Germany, wilt thou perform the same
And leave thine innocence to the power of Heaven ?

Hen. (Stands boldly up and confronts HILD.) Most mighty
Hildebrand, Prelate of Holy Rome,
Though to refuse thy gage be to acknowledge
His consciousness of human frailty,
Henry of Germany, whate'er his sins,
Hath too much sense of Heaven's mighty justice
To desecrate the eternal bending Ear
By such blasphemings. I am no priest of God,
I am no Pope, august, infallible,
But only a weak and fallible sinning man,
As Heaven knoweth. But in this grave matter,
If thou be right and I be wholly wrong,

Heaven knoweth already without such dread presumption.
'Tis not for Church but men you judge this issue,
Hence, I demand a larger audience,
Tribunal more public than these witnesses,
Impartial, unprejudiced toward my wrongs,
So be I judged, it be not in a corner.
Meanwhile, if I have erred, in my new kingship
In word or deed against thy holy office
Here as a faithful son of holy Church
By that great love I bear for Germany,
By that dread duty I owe my wife and child,
I crave thy pardon and beseech thy blessing. [Kneels.

Hild. Henry of Germany, thou standest now,
Rebuked of Heaven before the eyes of men.
As I had power to place thee under ban,
Alienate from holy Church and men,
So I withdraw that ban from off thee now.
Arise, my Son, in thy new penitence,
The Church commands thee, rise, and go in peace.

HENRY stands. The Pope and the Cardinals pass out.

Hen. 'Tis off! 'tis off, I am a man once more.
Out! out! let us without! I cannot breathe
In these damned walls!

[Curtain.

SCENE III.—(*A poorly furnished room. MARGARET seated by a meagre fire nursing her sick child.*)

Marg. O Gerbhart! Gerbhart! in what living stone
Are you entombed, dead to our sorrow now?
Ah, my poor Baby, fatherless, fatherless, now.
Dying! dying! Like a pallid candle,
I watch your little spark to less and less
Go slowly deathwards. Hark! I hear a step,
Hush your moans, my Babe. Was it your cry?
Or but the wind, the icy, winter wind,
The cruel midnight, eating with icy tooth
The hearts of mortals?

Enter ARIALD.

Ar. Margaret, I have come !

Marg. Yea, so have Winter, Misery, Despair and Death,
Your kindlier brothers. Hunger may be gaunt,
But he is honest. Death be terrible,
But he hath mercy on the pinch'd cheek
And cruel, tortured heart ; but who art thou ?

Ar. Knowest me not, Margaret ?

Marg. I know the Pope, who is a monster stone
That all the world like some poor maddened sea,
Might beat against and break and break in vain ;
I know earth's misery, its inhuman silence,
Where gaunt and shadowy eyes glare round and watch
The slow, brute process nearer, day by day
Of hunger gnawing at the walls of life ;
But thee I know not, thou art far too dread
For my poor knowledge. When I see thy face
This earth doth seem a hell and God a devil.

Ar. Margaret, forswear this maddened mood.
Catherine, your mother killed herself,
By her own folly, hoping against hope.
Bethink you of your child. You murder it
In killing my poor hopes. Give me thy love,
And life to thy sweet babe, be not so cruel,
You forced me to this, I would not have stirred
One finger to molest you or your child,
Had you not by your beauty raised in me
A longing for to own you, call you mine.
Gerbhert never loved as I have loved,
It eats me like a wasting all these years.
Had I been Gerbhert, master of your love,
And this my child, I would have fought the world,
Ere I'd have left you, dared both Hell and Heaven,
Rather than let one furrow groove your cheek,
One sorrow rack your soul. O Margaret, Margaret,
Say but the word, that I may save thy child,

Give me the right to fan that poor flame back,
And thine old beauty to its former glow.

Marg. Blackness ! blackness ! I grope ! I grope ! I grope !
Forgive me, Heaven, forgive me ! There is no Heaven !
There is no God ! The universe one cave,
Where I, a blinded bat do beat my wings
In wounded darkness. O my child, my child !
Some one must save thee !

Ar. I am the only answer to thy prayer,
If there's a God, he speaks to thee through me,
Margaret, Margaret, thou wilt come with me.

Marg. What shall I do ? Is there no other voice ?

Ar. Yea, thou wilt come. Thou wilt forget all this,
In future happiness. Come, my Margaret !

(Margaret rises to her feet as if to go with him, then stops.)

Ar. Nay, nay, I am thine answer, God saith yea, to this.

Marg. O God ! O God ! *(To ARIALD)* Thou hast thine

Ar. Margaret ! [answer now !

Marg. God sends thine answer now. My babe is dead !

(Falls heavily to the ground.) (ARIALD steals out.)

Ar. Beaten, beaten, beaten at the last !
I almost believe me, even evil me,
There is a God !

[Curtain.

SCENE IV.—*A battle-field. Enter troops marching.*
Fighting begins in the distance. Enter two officers.

1st O. This is the final chance for Germany.
Be Henry now defeated on this field,
He loses empire, Rodulph holds the west.

2nd O. Woe with poor Germany, her lands lie waste,
Her cities either sacked or armed forts,
Withstand the common foe ; her King outcast,
Battles for his rule with his own vassals.

(*Enter HENRY with a few knights.*)

Hen. This way, this way, the enemy press back,
One struggle now for Germany and my crown.

(*All pass out. Enter WOLF of Bamberg, with the head of RODULPH.*)

Wolf. Ha, ha, thou thing that wert a pope's retainer,
Roll there the nonce an' mix thee with the dust,
Thou that dared a king's prerogatives.

(*Re-enter HENRY.*)

Wolf. Victory ! Sire ; victory !

Hen. How now ?

Wolf. I bring thee not thy crown, but rather the head
That would have worn it. Knowest the face ?

Hen. Rodulph !

Wolf. Even so, his army be repulsed,
And Germany is thine to rule once more.

(*Enter Soldiers.*)

Hen. Good Lords and Generals, Fellow-countrymen,
The enemy to all our peace is dead,
His army routed and the battle ours,
The God of battles now hath smiled our way,
We will henceforth resume our royal sway.
See that our pardon be proclaimed wide
To all who lay down arms or join our ranks.
Meantime we bury this defeated rebel
And with him memory of this evil time,
Then hence to Rome to make our empery strong.
Know henceforth Lords and Generals, Henry stands
The champion of Europe's civil rights,
The friend of liberty and trampled man.
Nor shall this sword be sheathed till Germany
And Italy, yea, all of Europe's soil
Be freed from sway of proud, pretentious priests,
And peace, humanity and freedom reign.

[*Curtain.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—(*A fortress near Milan, where GREGORY is in exile. Enter MARGARET, crazed, with her dead babe in her arms.*)

Marg. They would have stopped me, but my love's good
Did cheat them all. O, my sweet, waxen Babe, [cunning
The Holy Father, he will tell me true,
An' make thee smile agen, thou art not dead,
They lie who say thou'rt dead. Here cometh one

Enter HILD. much older looking, accompanied by PETER.

Who hath a holy face, he'll speak for me
Unto the Pope to make thee smile agen.

Hild. Nay, Peter, they may rail and rail at me,
Strip all my wealth and make them fifty Popes,
They will not shake me.

Pet. Gregory, Gregory, ponder well thine answer,
Remember, if thou art the real Pope,
Thou art not in Rome.

Hild. Wherever I am, Rome is ! They may drive
Me into farthest banishment, they but put
God's holiness from out their precincts. I am Rome !

Marg. Good Father :

Pet. Woman, what wantest thou here ?

Hild. Drive her not out, Peter, see, her reason
Like me from my high Papacy, is exiled
From her poor body. I would speak with her.
Sorrow and defeat make men more kindly.

(*To MARGARET.*) Daughter, wouldst thou speak a word
with me ?

Mar. Sir, I would see the Pope, but his attendants
Would drive me out, an' my sweet baby here.
They say he's dead an' he will smile no more,
'Tis but because that terrible Pope had laid
His curse on us my babe will never smile.

Hild. Poor Girl, thy child is dead.

Marg. Nay, nay, 'tis only this dread awful curse.
You are a kind old man, you'll go with me,
And plead with me unto that terrible Pope,
And make him take this curse from off our lives,
An' make my baby smile.

Hild. What curse, my daughter ?

Marg. Take me but to him, I will tell it all,
But here my mind forsakes me, someone said
I was his daughter, but they must have lied.
God would not make a father so unkind
To curse his only daughter, kill her joy,
And make her baby like my baby here.

Hild. O God, O God, it cannot, cannot be !
A mist seems growing up before mine eyes !
Peter, Peter, this is mine own daughter.

Pet. Yea, she is distract. These women ever
Do come betwixt us and our sight of heaven.

Hild. My Daughter, know thy father. I am the Pope.

Marg. Nay, nay, but thou art kindly, hast no heart
To lay a winter like is laid on me ?

Hild. Nay, Daughter, I am he, that awful man,
I am Pope Gregory.

Marg. Then if you be, take off this hideous curse,
Make my babe laugh and crow and stuff his hands
In rosy mouth, and speak his father's name,
And he will come. They say thou hast God's ear,
And He will do it.

Hild. O Peter, Peter, this would break my heart
Were I but human.

Pet. Send her away. Thou canst do her no good,
The child is dead, and she hath lost her reason.
Much must be suffered here that good may come.
Send her away.

Hild. Nay, Peter, I have worked full o'er enough
For Holy Church, this much God asked of me,

He did not make me butcher to my child.
Hildebrand in sorrow finds a heart.

Out, out thou cruel man, for one short hour
Let me forget the Pope and be a father.

[*Exit* PETER.]

Marg. Holy Father, make my baby smile,
And God will thank thee by a mother's heart.

Hild. Daughter, God will make thy baby smile,
When thou and I and others like us smile,
And we have put aside this earthly dross
That weights our spirits down, in His Great Judgment.

Marg. O, Father, thou art kind, and thou wilt do it,
Thou hast all power, all heaven-given strength,
To bless, to ban, to slay to make alive :
O bring my baby back to me again.

Hild. Daughter, I am but a weak, despised old man,
One poor enough in even this life's powers
To make him jealous o' yon sweet, sleeping babe
Whom the angel of death makes waxen in thine arms.

Marg. O Father, tell me not that he is dead.

Hild. Margaret, Margaret, this is not thy babe,
But some sweet marbled mould of what he was.
I know a bank where we will plant this blossom,
And water it anew with our poor tears.
Could I as easy bury my black griefs,
And all the storm-cloud passions of this life,
God knows, I'd make me sexton to them all.
Come, let us out.

[*Exit both.*]

Enter PETER and a Bishop.

Pet. He hath gone out with some mad woman but now,
He gets more in his dotage day by day.
I cannot move him, thou canst try thy power.

Bish. If he would only come to terms with Henry,
And patch this foolish quarrel, the Church is safe,
And if not then—

Pet. Then what ?

Bish. He must be brought to make his deposition.

Pet. He'd die first ere he would do either,
Here he comes.

Enter HILDEBRAND, bearing the dead body of MARGARET.

'Tis the mad woman.

Hild. Come help me to lay her here. She was my
[c'aughter.

Bish. Is his Holiness mad, that he uttereth thus,
Such scandal 'gainst the Church's dignity?

Hild. Nay, rather found his reason for an hour,
Like other men through earth's humanities.
Mine arrogance did dream I was above
Men's humble sorrows. See my soul rebuked.
She bore it Peter till the first clod fell
Upon yon little blossom, then she shook,
And when it passed from sight her soul passed too.
I fear me much we blunder out God's truths,
And mar His angels with our brutal laws,
And change His temple to a prison house.
She was a blossom, Peter, so like her mother,
I'll bury her out there beside her babe,
And when the winds shake and the roses blow,
They'll know each other as their angels know
Each other in Heaven. Would I were sleeping too!
Dost know mine age, Peter? I am over sixty.

Pet. Your holiness forgets. The bishop would speak
[with you.

Hild. Forgive me bishop, aye, 'tis thou Brunelli,
What is thy business?

Brunelli. Your Holiness must pardon my intrusion
On this o'er sad occasion, important matters
Must be their own excuse. I will speak plainly;—
One by one your party leaves you, soon
You will be desolate. Our only chance is now.

Hild. Ha! now? And now!

Brunelli You must meet Henry.

Hild. Never!

Brunelli. Then Peter, tell him for I cannot.

Pet. The matter, Gregory, is in short thou must
Plant empery upon bold Henry's head
Or lose thy tiara.

Hild. Never, as I am Pope, I will do neither!
Though I am wasted, aged, worn and weak,
Deserted by false friends and hireling hounds,
I still am Gregory. Never hand but mine
Can dare uncrown me. Let him dread my curse
Who'd force me to it. Yea, that hand will shrivel
Ere it uncrowns me. People the world with Popes,
There's but one Peter. Look on this my sorrow
Embittering with its pangs mine olden age,
And know what I have done for Holy Church.
By that sweet face that lieth there in death,
A martyr, if ever was one, to God's great cause,
I bid you go and tell proud Henry, yea,
And all those false, foul prelates of the church,
That Hildebrand who crushed out his own heart,
To keep the right will die as he hath lived.

[*Curtain.*

SCENE II.—(*A chapel close near the castle. The grave of Margaret and her child marked by a cross.*) Enter HILDEBRAND leaning on the arm of PETER.

Hild. Little did I dream that it was I
Would be the first to go. O, Peter, Peter,
This world—ambition hath eaten up my heart,
And my life with it. Better to be there
Where she doth lie than to be God's Vicar.

Pet. Gregory if you would only compromise,
And meet the wishes of the Cardinals,
And temper Henry, you might die in Rome.

Hild. Never, never, better end me here,

Than give my life the lie. Do they their worst,
What I have lived for, I will die for too.
Better the Church go crumble all to ruins
And Europe be a field of ravening wolves,
Than compromise be purchased at such price,
And sell the Church's right to impious hounds,
And make the temple of God a den of thieves.
Go, Peter, go, your heart is like the rest.
Go, leave me, I am but a poor old man,
Weak, palsied, leaning slowly to my tomb,
I need no friend, God will be merciful,
Though cold and rude earth's loves, I can but die.

Pet. Thou knowest, Gregory, I will never leave thee.

Hild. 'Twill not be long, and then they'll have their will,
O, Europe ! Europe ! Peter, wilt thou see
That this place is kept sacred. Yon rose tree
Kept watered, and yon twin-mound holy,
Till thou dost die ?

Pet. I will.

Hild. She was my daughter, Peter, and like her mother,
And the poor babe it looked so sweet in death,
Mine age went to it. O, Damiani,
These women and children twine about our hearts.

Pet. Wilt you go within ?

Hild. Methought I heard one hum an old-time tune.

Pet. Nay, Gregory, thou meanest a chant or hymn.

Hild. Nay, Peter, but a simple ballad tune,
That I loved long ago. Know thee, Peter,
All music is of God, and it be holy.

Pet. What be that noise ? (*rising*) Who be those coming

Hild. Peter, thou wilt keep this place ? [here ?

Pet. Hildebrand : Hildebrand : Gregory : dost thou hear ?
Many cardinals and bishops come this way.

Enter Cardinals, Bishops and Lords.

Card. Brunelli. Your Holiness !

Hild. (*Rising suddenly and waving his hand imperiously.*)
Back ! back ! This ground be holy !

Brunelli. We be come, my Lord,—

Hild. Back ! back ! or fear my curse. Sully not
These silent, dreamless ears with impious words
Of earth's ambitions, Church's greed and curse.
Desecrate not this peace with life's mad riot.
'Tis dedicate to memories alone
Of youth and innocence.

[*They fall back; he goes forward.*]

Hild. What be your will ?

Brunelli. May it please your Holiness, we come from
[Rome.]

Hild. I am Rome ! And when these old walls crumble,
Rome hath fallen, till another be built.
'Twill not be long.

Pet. Know lord Cardinals that the Holy Father
Is indisposed. Complete your business.

Hild. Nay, not ill, but rather worn of life
And its vexatious evils, foolish toils.
Aye, lord Cardinals, weigh you my curse so heavy ?
That ye have came so far to crave my blessing ?

Brunelli. We come, my Lord, to heal this cruel schism
That rendeth Holy Church and maketh mock
Of Peter's chair, throughout all Christendom.
Henry of Germany—

Hild. Silence : or I'll forget the Church's good,
And curse her Cardinal. Name me not that monster,
Save in anathema. Look on me Brunelli,
And these poor hands wherein life's blood runs cold,
So that they scarce can lift in Church's blessing ;
Look on my face and see Death written there,
In plainest charactry. Yet know proud Cardinals,
I still am Peter till my latest breath.

(*He staggers.* PETER catches him in his arms.)

Pet. Great God, he dies. Help ! help ! lord Cardinals,
The greatest soul in Europe passeth now. [help !

Hild. (*Staggers to his feet.*) I am going Damiani, heard
you sounds

Of rustling pinions ? Did you know a presence
That darkened all the horizon with its wings ?

Nay, I can stand alone. Unhand me, Peter !

Lord Cardinals and Prelates to your knees !

Take you my blessing, 'tis my latest hour ! [all kneel.

All ye who have been true to Holy Church.

Take my last blessing. All who have been false,

Take ye my— Catherine ! Catherine ! O my God ! (*Dies.*)

[Curtain

